

Division BS2525
Section R13

HOW TO TEACH THE
NEW TESTAMENT

By the Same Author

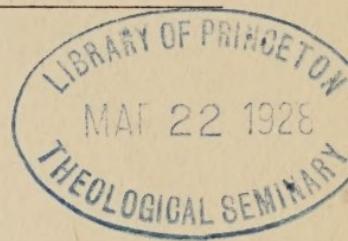
HOW TO
TEACH THE
OLD TESTAMENT

Uniform with this Volume

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LTD., PUBLISHERS, LONDON

HOW TO TEACH THE NEW TESTAMENT

By FREDERICK J. RAE, M.A.
DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
IN THE ABERDEEN TRAINING CENTRE



HODDER AND STOUGHTON
PUBLISHERS LONDON

First Published . . . September 1927

Made and Printed in Great Britain for Hodder and Stoughton Limited,
by Butler & Tanner Ltd., Frome and London

To

Lucy Jane Brown-Douglas
with
Affection and Gratitude

Preface

THE plan of this book is the same as that employed in its predecessor, *How to Teach the Old Testament*. Each chapter is divided into three sections. The first contains information on general points, or points of difficulty, which should be known to the teacher, whether he uses it in his lesson or not. It is at any rate a necessary background to his teaching. The second section contains notes on obscure terms, on geographical or historical references, and on expressions that need some elucidation. The third section contains the lesson, based on this general and detailed information. It will be noticed that the lessons on the apostolic period are fuller than those on the Gospels. The reasons for this are, that these lessons are more purely narrative, that the facts underlying the text of Acts are less familiar than those in the life of Christ, and that the incidents can only be made vivid and clear if these facts are worked into the story.

On one point a brief statement may be useful in explanation and vindication. In a friendly review of the author's previous book a writer hinted that the application at the close of each lesson might lead teachers to moralize or preach. This would be a calamity! But at the same time I hold strongly that religious education is not given at all unless the permanent religious meaning of the incidents is brought

out. The history in the Bible belongs to the “homiletic” type. The Bible historian always had his eye on the divine meaning of events. When this is ignored it is possible to teach a Bible lesson without leaving any religious impression whatever. That is not religious instruction. It is not even teaching the “facts.” For the facts in the Bible are always divine facts. How then is religious teaching to be given without “moralizing ? ” The best way is to let the children themselves find and apply the truth. My experience is that, if you allow them to do this, there is no part of the lesson in which they are so eagerly interested.

I am again greatly indebted to some friends for their help. Miss Lucy Brown-Douglas has typed the whole of my manuscript, and has made many suggestions of value. My chief, Dr. Edward, Director of Studies in the Aberdeen Training Centre, has read the book, and his experience and judgment have been a very real assistance. I have given, on another page, a list of the books that have been specially useful to me. But I would like to make particular mention of one to which I owe a great deal in the preparation both of this book and of that on the Old Testament. I mean Sir George Adam Smith’s *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*. It is almost indispensable to the teacher.

Contents

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	15
I THE BIRTH OF JESUS	27
II THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS	32
III THE CALL OF JESUS. Vocation	37
IV THE BAPTISM OF JESUS. Consecration	41
V THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS	45
VI OUTLINE OF THE MINISTRY OF JESUS	50
VII JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES	51
VIII A DAY IN THE LIFE OF JESUS	57
IX THE MIRACLES OF JESUS	60
X THE CENTURION AND HIS SERVANT. Faith	63
XI THE PARALYTIC. Jesus the Saviour from Sin	66
XII THE DEMONIAC. The Power of Jesus	70
XIII JAIRUS'S DAUGHTER. The Lord of Death	74
XIV THE DINNER AT SIMON'S. Much Forgiveness, Much Love	77
XV JESUS AS A TEACHER	81
XVI HOW TO KEEP THE LORD'S DAY	84
XVII THE SOWER. How to Listen	88
XVIII THE GOOD SAMARITAN. Neighbour is Who Neighbour Does	93
XIX THE PRODIGAL SON. What God is	97
XX THE DEATH OF THE BAPTIST. Sin and its Fruit	101

	PAGE
XXI THE SYRO-PHœNICIAN WOMAN. The Faith that Wins	105
XXII THE BOY WITH THE LOAVES AND FISHES. Humble Service	109
XXIII PETER'S CONFESSION. Faith in Christ . .	113
XXIV THE CRISIS. The Shadow of the Cross . .	118
XXV THE TRANSFIGURATION. Hear Him !	124
XXVI PRAYER. Why Should We Pray ?	128
XXVII THE LORD'S PRAYER. What Christianity is	133
XXVIII THE UNRIGHTEOUS STEWARD. Prudence . in Religion	138
XXIX THE TEN LEPERS. Gratitude	142
XXX JESUS AND CHILDREN	147
XXXI THE RICH YOUNG RULER. Single-minded- ness	150
XXXII ZACCHÆUS. The Seeking Saviour	155
XXXIII THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY. Jesus the King .	159
XXXIV THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE. Righteous Anger	164
XXXV THE LORD'S SUPPER. How Christ is Present	170
XXXVI GETHSEMANE. The Secret of Victory . .	176
XXXVII THE BETRAYAL. Treachery	181
XXXVIII PETER'S DENIAL. Weakness	187
XXXIX THE TRIALS. <i>Ecce Homo!</i>	192
XL THE CRUCIFIXION. The Cross	199
XLI THE RESURRECTION. A Living Christ . . .	203
XLII THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES	209
XLIII THE WAITING CHURCH. The Promise . .	213
XLIV PENTECOST. The Holy Spirit	220
XLV AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE. Succour for the Needy	227
XLVI THE ARREST OF THE APOSTLES. Courage .	232

	PAGE
XLVII STEPHEN. A Living Church	238
XLVIII PHILIP'S MISSIONS. Christ for All	244
XLIX THE CONVERSION OF SAUL. Conversion	248
L CORNELIUS. Seeking and Finding	253
LI THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY. Providence	259
LII THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY (<i>continued</i>)	266
LIII THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS	269
LIV THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM. A Catholic Faith	273
LV PAUL AND BARNABAS. The Second Chance	279
LVI THE SECOND JOURNEY. Philippi. Salvation	281
LVII ATHENS. Failure	288
LVIII CORINTH. Success	294
LIX THE LETTERS TO THE THESSALONIANS	298
LX THE THIRD JOURNEY. Ephesus. Religion and Self-interest	301
LXI THE FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS	307
LXII THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM. 2. Corinthians. A Picture of Paul	310
LXIII PAUL BEFORE FELIX. Opportunity	316
LXIV PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA. Indifference	321
LXV THE VOYAGE TO ROME. The Power of Faith	325
LXVI THE END AND THE BEGINNING	330

Literature

THE following is a list of the books that have been used in the preparation of these lessons :—

1. For the Gospels.

The Expositor's Greek Testament (Bruce).

Stock : *Lessons on the Life of our Lord*.

Robbie : *Lessons on the Life of Jesus Christ*.

Rawlinson : *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (the Westminster Commentaries).

J. A. Findlay : *Jesus in the First Gospel*.

Stalker : *The Life of Jesus Christ*.

Burton and Mathews : *The Life of Christ* (Constructive studies).

Budden and Hastings : *The Local Colour of the Bible*, Vol. III.

2. For the Apostolic Period.

Blunt : *The Acts of the Apostles* (Clarendon Press).

Rackham : *The Acts of the Apostles* (Oxford Commentaries).

Ramsay : *St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen*.

Wood : *The Life, Letters and Religion of St. Paul*.

Foakes-Jackson : *The Life of St. Paul*.

Andrews : *The Acts of the Apostles* (Westminster New Testament).

Grant : *Ideals of the Early Church*.

Penstone and Hughes : *The Story of Christ's First Missioners*.

Still : *The Early Gentile Christian Church*.

Stalker : *The Life of St. Paul*.

Introduction

I. THE WORLD TO WHICH JESUS CAME

WHEN the child passes from the Old Testament to the New he naturally assumes that he is still in the same mental world. But four hundred years had passed since Ezra closed the Old Testament history, and these centuries had witnessed events and influences which had deeply marked and largely moulded the Jewish people. It is therefore necessary that the teacher should know something of what had happened. If the student of English history were to pass from 1527 to 1927, ignoring all that had occurred during these four centuries, he would certainly not understand our modern period. And the revolution had been at least as great in the case of Israel. At the outset therefore, a brief account is given of the main incidents and forces that were in operation in our Lord's day.

1. *What happened between the Testaments.* When Israel returned from exile to her own land she was not, as of old, a state or a kingdom. She was rather a religious community. She had no king, no army, no court or secular government. She was a church. The Temple was the centre of her life, and the Law its basis. These are the two main factors to be emphasized. Her life was based on the written Law, and her main interest was worship, a worship which was more and

more an elaborate ritual and included festivals and sacrifices.

Naturally in these circumstances the *Priest* became the dominant figure in the community. He regulated the worship and the sacrifices and presided at the festivals. And the main change in Israel's life became this, the exchange of the prophet for the priest. In the previous period the best religion of Israel had been prophetic, evangelical, spiritual. In the new period it became priestly, ritual, sacramental. And the governing power was placed in the hands of the priestly caste, which now became the dominant force in the nation. But another influence arose at this time which became more powerful as time went on—that of the *Scribe*. The Law had been made by Ezra the foundation of the nation's duty. Hence it was all-important to know what the Law required. What, for example, did it involve to keep the Sabbath? What could be done, and what must not be done, on the Sabbath? That was only one of many questions the Law raised. To answer these questions, and to instruct the people on the divine requirements, there arose a new class of lawyers called "Scribes." Naturally they magnified their office, and gradually built up a huge edifice of regulations which interpreted the Law to the people. These were the "traditions of the elders" which, because of their minute pedantry, became so great a burden. Jesus often speaks of these regulations, and always with scorn. The Law and the Temple, then, the Scribe and the Priest, became the chief features of Israel's life.

In the course of these four centuries an event occurred which, among other results, emphasized the separation between the two classes referred to. This was the

famous Maccabean rebellion. It was occasioned by the attempt of the Greek kings to force Greek customs on Israel. This attempt caused a division in the nation. Some favoured the new customs, others sternly resisted them. The former included many of the priestly class, which, from its possession of power and wealth, had become worldly and latitudinarian ; the latter was largely made up of the devotees of the Law. This was the origin of the two great parties, the *Sadducees* (largely priestly, aristocratic and worldly) and the *Pharisees* (who represented the middle class, were strict in their attachment to the Law and to the cause of purity of faith and of race, and were fanatical patriots). The name Pharisee means "separate," and it is important to remember that the sect arose first (or at any rate its predecessor and ancestor) in an earnest protest against worldliness and against the weakening of Israel's purity and faith and loyalty to God's will. By the time of our Lord, indeed, the Pharisaic party had sadly degenerated. But that is often the fate of a body that starts in a revival of religious life. It often loses its initial earnestness and in time becomes a mere barren orthodoxy that is devoted to the words and forms and customs that were once full of life and reality. This happened to the Pharisees, and it is the chief criticism Jesus makes on the sect in the Gospels. They, on their part, were enraged at Jesus because He calmly ignored or defied their sacred "regulations." The Pharisaic party may be said to have been organized to carry out in detail the teaching of the scribes. The two were substantially identical. Hence the phrase in the Gospels "the scribes and Pharisees."

One other event of this period must be mentioned. During most of the four hundred years the Jews were

an oppressed race, held down by foreign tyrants. And yet they had the great promises of their sacred books ! Relying on these promises they looked to the future to produce a great Leader who would come and restore Israel to her old place of power. This was the Messianic hope, and it was fostered by a literature which arose at this time, the *Apocalyptic Books*. Daniel in the Old Testament, and Revelation in the New, are the best examples in the Bible. But there were many books written in the same fashion which are not in our Bible. They are unusual in their language and in their weird imagery. But they are all characterized by one thing, their confidence that God will interpose and by a vivid stroke from heaven will bring Israel's enemies to the dust and raise Israel to a proud eminence. Often in these predictions a great Figure appears who is to be God's vice-gerent and lead the people to their victory. This was the great hope that possessed the people when Jesus appeared.

2. How the World was Governed. A succession of foreign powers had held sway over the world during these centuries, Persian, Greek and Roman. For some fifty years before our Lord came Rome had been mistress of the world. Rome ruled her subject races in three ways. Those who were easy to govern she ruled through native princes, just as we govern the native states of India. Galilee is an example, ruled by the Herods who paid tribute to Rome but otherwise exercised an independent power. Provinces that were difficult to handle, rebellious and intractable, Rome ruled directly by a Roman Governor who alone had the power of life and death. Judaea is an example of this method and the governors in the New Testament time were Pilate, Felix and Festus. The third method was by "colonies,"

settlements of ex-service men planted down in foreign lands with large independent powers. So long as a subject race was loyal and conformed to decent standards it could worship and believe as it pleased, and Rome not only tolerated but protected every foreign creed and cult. This is the explanation of the protection St. Paul invariably received from Roman governors, like Gallio. It was under the shield of Rome that Christianity flourished and spread at the beginning. This policy of Rome was part of the divine preparation for Christianity. It was only when Rome discovered the real danger to its supremacy that lay in Christianity that it began to persecute the new faith.

3. Religion in the time of Jesus. There were two religions with which the founders of the Christian Church came into contact—the pagan religion and the Jewish.

Pagan religion appeared in various forms. The popular religion was the old polytheism, a belief in the many Gods, Jupiter, Mercury, Apollo and the like. This was found chiefly in the remoter districts. Paul and Barnabas came into touch with it at Lystra (Acts 14¹¹⁻¹⁸). Among the educated this popular religion had been abandoned and its place was taken by philosophy, chiefly the Stoic and Epicurean sects. St. Paul met representatives of these sects at Athens (Acts 17¹⁸). The actual state religion, however, was the worship of the emperor as the embodiment of the divine authority. This has survived to our day in “the divine right of kings.” This was the awful apostasy referred to in the book of Revelation. When the persecution of Christianity began the test was whether Christians would burn incense to the statue of the emperor. Finally, it may be said of this time that it was given up to superstition in many forms. In a time of transition, when the old

is gone and the new is not yet in possession, superstition has a great place. The soul of man must have some satisfaction and if it does not find this in a religion of authority it finds it in superstition. Hence the sorcerers (Simon Magus, Acts 8⁹⁻¹¹, and Elymas, Acts 13¹¹) and the fortune-tellers (the girl at Philippi, Acts 16¹⁶⁻¹⁸) and the like that infested the pagan world.

There was a kind of religious satisfaction provided by the "mystery religions," but apparently there were many who were not appealed to by these and who longed for an authentic revelation of God. These often found what they wanted in the Jewish Synagogue, and therefore in our Lord's day there was round every synagogue a fringe of pagan outsiders, "adherents" of the faith, worshippers and grateful supporters of the Jewish Church (the centurion in Luke 7, Cornelius in Acts 10, and the many references to the "God-fearing" in Acts). It was among these pious outsiders the Gospel found many of its first converts.

The *Jewish* religion may be described in a few words. It was first a strict monotheism, which had been purified of all idolatry. But it was a national monotheism. There was only one God, but he was the God of the Jew in a special sense. This gave him his religious pride, his fanaticism and his intense devotion. Further, the exclusiveness of the Jewish religion was expressed and emphasized by the dominance of the Law which was the embodiment of God's will. The real teachers of Israel were the scribes, and they gave to Jewish religion its legal character. This again contributed to that religious pride and self-righteousness, that formalism and exclusiveness, which we find so often referred to by Jesus. Finally, we must not forget the great hope of a coming deliverer which lay always at the heart of Jewish faith,

and gave it its courage and confidence. These then were the features of Jewish religion, an intensely nationalist monotheism, based on the Law and cherishing a hope of a divine deliverance.

4. *The Language Jesus spoke.* The universal language of the world of Jesus' day, the language of commerce and of educated intercourse, was Greek. It was Alexander the Great who had spread the Greek culture and the Greek language over the world. The colonies of Jews living abroad, in Italy and Africa, in Asia Minor and Macedonia, all spoke this popular Greek. This prevalence of Greek was part of the divine preparation for Christianity, for the Apostles found everywhere audiences able to understand them, and did not need (as modern missionaries have to do) to learn the language of the people they came to evangelize. It is certain that Jesus could speak Greek, for He conversed with the Syro-Phoenician woman, He talked with Pilate (who would not know Aramaic), and He interviewed the Greeks who came to see Him at the Feast. But it is equally certain that He did not habitually speak Greek. His native language was Aramaic. This was the form Hebrew had taken in His day. Just as Latin gave birth to Italian which is its modern form, so the Hebrew of the Old Testament gave birth to Aramaic. We have many proofs in the Gospels that Jesus spoke Aramaic habitually. We have His very words on many occasions, such as "talitha cumi" to the little girl, "Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani" on the Cross, "Ephphatha" to the deaf man, "Boanerges," His nickname for John and James, and other instances. The people He addressed in Palestine would seldom know Greek and Jesus spent most of His time with the common people.

Literature. Those who wish to know more fully about the conditions of life and religion in our Lord's day may pursue the subject with the aid of the following books : *The Background of the Gospels*, by Rev. W. Fairweather (T. & T. Clark). *The Times of Christ*, by Rev. L. A. Muirhead (T. & T. Clark). These are popular books, but trustworthy and sufficient for ordinary purposes.

II. THE MAKING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

In addition to some knowledge of the world in our Lord's day, the teacher ought to know how our New Testament came to be what it is. Apart from any other reason there is the natural question : are these books trustworthy historical documents ? Can we be sure of the facts ? A brief outline is therefore given here of the conclusions of sane and reliable criticism.

1st Stage. At the beginning the believers had nothing but the Old Testament (their Bible) and the preaching of the Apostles and Evangelists. The story of Jesus' ministry was told by those who had first-hand knowledge.

2nd Stage, the "Oral Gospel." Naturally when an apostle told his story over and over again it tended to assume a fixed form. Even professors' lectures tend to do this ! There were, however, many such narrators, and their narratives would be alike in some ways and different in others. They would be alike in containing the great outstanding incidents (like the birth, the temptation, the passion and the resurrection). They would be unlike in other particulars, because one person would choose this or that incident or parable or

discourse such as specially appealed to him. Thus the story of Jesus existed all over the church in forms which were as yet unwritten and were in the big matters similar, in others different, but more or less in *fixed* forms.

3rd Stage, the Letters. The first parts of our New Testament to be written were the Letters of St. Paul. They date from about A.D. 50 onwards. They were written to meet particular occasions. They were not written to be part of a Bible but simply (as any letters are written) to deal with some special situation. For the most part they were dictated, and bear the marks of this spoken style. Most of them were written before A.D. 60, and, with certain exceptions, they are accepted universally as the compositions of the authors whose names they bear.

4th Stage, Fragmentary Gospels. For a time the Church was content with the Oral narratives of eye-witnesses. But these men were passing away. Also the Church was extending and there were not enough eye-witnesses to go round. And, finally, the new converts needed some authoritative statement of the Christian facts. For all these reasons there arose a demand for written narratives, and in answer to the demand many narratives were produced (see St. Luke 1¹⁻⁴). These must have been in many cases mere fragments. There were, perhaps, accounts of one day in our Lord's life, or one incident, or one discourse.

5th Stage, the Final Gospels. But how was the Church to choose among all these narratives? Which was authoritative? There must have been many that were unreliable. We know, in fact, that there were. And so the Church laid down a test. The narrative must, of course, be complete. But it must also be by an

apostle. It was on this ground that our four Gospels were finally selected and all others rejected. St. Mark was not written by an apostle, but a very ancient witness (to-day accepted as true by nearly all critics) tells us that Mark wrote down the recollections of St. Peter, that he was really Peter's amanuensis. So that his Gospel has the authority of Peter behind it. St. Luke was not an apostle, but he was in close touch with the apostles and apparently got much of his information from the apostolic circle. In this way, then, the four Gospels were accepted by the Church and became the first part of the New Testament canon—the first Christian Bible.

6th Stage, the Letters again. But how were the letters made part of the sacred collection? In this way. For one thing they were written by apostles and had all the authority of such a source in them. For another, they were read in the assembly for worship, and were probably read often alongside the Gospel accounts. In these two ways they came by and by to have the same sanctity as the Gospel narratives. In this way they chose themselves, so to speak.

Thus the New Testament *grew*. It was not selected by any authority or Council. It grew by accretions and these accretions were decided by the Christian faith and experience of the Church. It is true that for some time certain books were considered doubtful. Hebrews was one because its authorship was doubtful. Revelation was another because of its weird contents. James was another because of its apparent contradiction of St. Paul. All these books were finally received because they were supposed to be written by an apostle. But nearly the whole of the New Testament was in use

in the Church about seventy years after the time of St. Paul.

NOTE.—*The Gospels.* It is generally agreed that our first three Gospels (the Synoptists) took their present shape somewhat as follows. (The detailed proofs must be sought in the literature.) The earliest Gospel was Mark. It contains the memorabilia of Peter and has therefore all the authority of a first-class historical witness (see Denney, *Jesus and the Gospel*, pp. 175–9). After Mark came Matthew and Luke. These both used Mark, followed his order and copied down in many cases his narrative word for word. But there is a good deal in Matthew and Luke that is not in Mark, chiefly discourses and stories of the birth of Jesus. This material (or some of it) they got from another early book written about the same time as Mark by the apostle Matthew. It is referred to as the Logia and the evidence for its existence is ancient and reliable. Finally both Matthew and Luke (but especially Luke) had other sources for special events or discourses. Luke tells us in his preface (1^{–4}. R.V.) that he had many narratives of eye-witnesses before him when he wrote. Thus the Gospels came into being as follows :

- (1) Mark and Logia—the original sources.
- (2) Other sources (such as those from which Matthew and Luke got their different accounts of the birth and resurrection, and Luke his special parables); and finally
- (3) Matthew and Luke basing themselves on Mark and drawing freely on Logia as well as on other sources for special themes.

The fourth Gospel is a special problem. There is a general tendency to-day to attribute it to an unknown author and not to the apostle John. But even when this position is taken it is agreed that much in his “gospel” is actual history and founded on genuine reminiscences.

I. THE BIRTH OF JESUS

ST. LUKE 2¹⁻²⁰, ST. MATTHEW 2¹⁻¹²

A. *For the Teacher*

1. *The Date of the Nativity.* 4 b.c. (Stalker), 7 b.c. (Moffatt). The statement of Luke that the registration took place when Quirinius was governor of Judæa had been questioned, on the ground that Quirinius was governor ten years later, when he did take a census. But it has been discovered that Quirinius was *twice* governor of Judæa, and it is supposed that the census was not for taxation but merely for statistical purposes like our own. This would remove most of the difficulties. It is suggested that Jesus was born during the summer since the shepherds would not have their sheep out at night in winter. But Stock (*Lessons on the Life of our Lord*) asserts that the weather was often very mild in Palestine in December, and holds by the traditional season.

2. *The Magi and the Star.* The wise men were “members of the learned class of the magicians, the repositories of science, philosophy, medical skill and religious mysteries in the countries beyond the Euphrates. Tacitus, Suetonius and Josephus tell us that in the regions from whence they came there then prevailed an expectation that a great king was about to arise in Judæa” (Stalker). These astrologers believed that an unusual phenomenon in the heavens portended a great event

on the earth, the appearance of a new star the birth of a king. Hence, with their knowledge of Jewish hopes and ambitions, they were led to the west in search of the new ruler. Legend has been busy with them. Their *three* gifts pointed to three men ; they were kings ; they were respectively young, middle-aged and old ; their names were Melchior, Caspar and Balthasar ; their gifts were symbolic—gold for a king, frankincense for a God, myrrh for burial. As to the *Star*, it has been held that it was a supernatural phenomenon created specially for the magi's guidance, that it was a natural conjunction of planets, and that it is a natural addition to the history. The favourite theory is the second, and we are told that Kepler found that at this very time there was visible a brilliant temporary star.

3. An Eastern Inn. This was probably a Khan, a spacious enclosure with rows of chambers, open to the sky but raised above the level of the floor. The camels were kept in the open central space, but a certain privacy would be found in the side chambers. It was a primitive and temporary accommodation. Sometimes there was a keeper or “host” (St. Luke 10^{34. 35}), but often the inn was just a refuge where people provided everything themselves but water. These khans were to be found on all trade routes and are mentioned once or twice in the New Testament (see *The Local Colour of the Bible*, Vol. III, by Budden and Hastings).

B. Notes

Luke ii. 1. *taxed*: rather enrolled. It was a census either for taxation or registration. The word really refers to a roll of names.

Verse 2. Bruce translates “this census took place as a first when Quirinius, etc.” This would confirm

the statement that Quirinius was twice governor of Judæa. "As a first" in contrast to a later.

Verse 3. Joseph and Mary belonged to Bethlehem though staying in Nazareth.

Verse 7. "*no room in the inn*": i.e. for a birth, for privacy. Hence retirement to a stall.

swaddling clothes: a band of cloth wound tightly round the child from ankles to neck. The same practice in Italy to-day.

Verse 8. *abiding*: "bivouacking" (Bruce), implying mild weather. Probably in summer?

Verse 10. *all people*: "all the people," i.e. Israel.

Verse 12. *sign*: to identify Him? or significant of His whole ministry?

Verse 14. *the angels' song*. On one reading the meaning is "Glory to God in high heaven, and peace on earth for men whom He favours" (Moffatt). With the usual Greek text the meaning is "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill among men."

in the highest: i.e. in the highest places.

Verse 15. *Let us now go*: rather "Come! let us go." The excitement of the shepherds is thus indicated.

Verse 17. omit "abroad." They told Joseph and Mary what they had seen.

Verse 19. Mary thought things over and brooded on their meaning.

St. Matt. ii. 1. *Bethlehem*: "House of Bread," referring to the fertility of the neighbourhood.

Herod: "Herod the Great." Distinguish the different Herods in the New Testament. Herod Antipas who put the Baptist to death and ruled in Galilee; Herod Agrippa I who put James to death;

and Herod Agrippa II before whom Paul appeared. Consult any Bible Dictionary.

from the East: Where? not known.

Verse 2. The object of their journey. They knew a King had been born because of the star.

Verse 3. Herod's fear was natural because of the unrest among the Jews.

Verse 5. Their answer from the Scriptures, Micah 5². Matthew freely alters the passage in Micah.

Verse 9. a little difficult to visualize. Did the star come down and stand over the house? This is difficult to credit. Is it an imaginative touch?

Verse 11. *house*: Possibly the family had been received into a friend's house before the visit of the magi. Note that the magi did not find Jesus in the stable of an inn.

gold, frankincense and myrrh: all commodities brought to Palestine from the East. Frankincense is a fragrant gum from a tree found in Arabia. It was valued for its fragrant odour when burnt. Myrrh is another gum resin from a shrub used in the process of embalming.

C. *The Lesson*

Point of Contact. Hands up those who have a baby in the home! The joy and blessing it brings. Well, here is a story of the coming of a baby to a home. The joy and blessing to Joseph and Mary. But how much joy and blessing to the whole world! *The Baby of all time.*

1. *Why He came.* To fulfil God's purpose. Quote Old Testament predictions—the great hope of the Old Testament (Gen. 12³; Isa. 9^{6,7}; Isa. 53). God's purpose to come to the help of His children and to let them

know how great His love and His power to help are. All this summed up in the name of the Baby "Jesus." A common name then, but in His case full of meaning.

2. *How He came.* The story—the census (cf. our modern census)—the journey—why to Bethlehem—the crowded town—house to house—the inn (describe, draw or model)—the manger—"swaddling bands."

3. *What Welcome did He get?* No welcome in the town—no welcome from His own people—Herod tried to kill Him—but two kinds of people welcomed Him ; (1) the magi—who they were—where from ?—how they came to seek Him—their gifts (do not "spiritualize" these)—their departure ; (2) the shepherds (get the angels' song by heart and let the children learn it)—did they have any gifts ? No. What did they give Him ? their love, the best gift. Read Miss Rosetti's poem, "A Christmas Carol," and repeat the last verse.

What can I give Him
Poor as I am ?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb,
If I were a wise man
I would do my part,—
Yet what I can I give Him.
Give Him my heart.

This is probably the point at which to stop, as it is the climax of the lesson.

Expression Work. In the narrower sense, either the collecting of Christmas pictures, or making a model of a Khan. In the larger sense, let the children make things in the class which may be sent to the needy, to an absent sick class-mate or to a children's hospital—picture-books, a letter from the class, toys, etc.

NOTE.—The story of the nativity may be taught round the subject of “birthdays.” Why do we give gifts on a birthday? To show that we are glad the person came into the world, a father’s gift to his little girl, e.g., so we may give gifts to Jesus for the same reason.

II. THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS

ST. LUKE 2^{39, 40, 51, 52.}

1. An important part of the study of any life is the information we may discover about its early days, the formative influences which may have operated during the sensitive period. A striking feature of the Gospel narrative is its silence about the early life of Jesus. The apocryphal gospels are full of wonder stories of the supernatural powers of the divine child. The absence of anything like that is a testimony to the historical trustworthiness of the Gospels. It is usual to say that we have only one incident about these early years. This is, however, to undervalue our knowledge. A good deal can be gathered from various sources, and the object of this lesson is to bring together the information we possess as to the influences which may have helped to form the growing mind of Jesus.

One thing to be impressed on children is that Jesus was a real boy. They are naturally inclined to think that He was unlike them, that He could not have had their temptations or been compelled to learn as they are. The texts at the head of this lesson tell us that Jesus pursued a normal growth, both in body and in mind, and it is this truth that is illuminated by all we know of His childhood. It is generally agreed that

Joseph died while Jesus was still young. He is not mentioned after the episode of the Passover visit (see St. John 2¹²; 19²⁷). This early bereavement would place a heavy responsibility on Jesus. He would have to work for the support of the family. And this may account for the fact that thirty years elapsed before He was ready to begin His public ministry. He had to help to bring up and settle the other children. There is no reason to suppose that His "brothers and sisters" were anything else than real brothers and sisters, and perhaps the crowded state of this narrow home led Jesus early to contract the habit of going up the hills for quiet thought and prayer.

2. *Natural Surroundings.* Jesus' youth was spent in Nazareth. It is a mistake to suppose that this meant a cloistered life in a remote backwater. Nazareth was in touch with a very busy and cosmopolitan life. "It was not as a rustic preaching to rustics that our Lord went about . . . He went forth in a part (of the Roman Empire) full of Roman civilization, busy and populous" (Walter Besant, quoted by G. A. Smith). Nazareth lay in a fold of the southern range of Galilee, but a short climb takes you to the top of the hill, from which an entrancing view lay before Jesus. At His feet was the storied Plain of Esdraelon "with its twenty battle-fields"; to the east was the valley of Jordan; to the west the Great Sea. "You see 30 miles in three directions. It is a map of Old Testament history." But more than this. Before the Boy's eyes were the roads that carried the stream of the great world's life, caravans of merchants, pilgrims, travellers, princes. Along these roads tramped the Roman legions. The whole life of this pagan, Roman-Greek world passed as a pageant before the Boy's gaze. And all round Him

were fields where the beauty of the flowers vied with the richness of the crops. It was a varied, exciting environment. (If possible the teacher should read the three pages in Sir G. A. Smith's *Historical Geography of the Holy Land* on Nazareth).

3. Political Conditions. The world at this time was under the sway of Rome, and Jesus came into contact with different Roman methods of government. He lived under the rule of Herod Antipas in Galilee, and under the direct Roman government in Judæa (see the Introduction for the political conditions of the time). The point to realize is that the Jews were discontented with their servitude under a pagan power. It was a galling contradiction of the ancient promises and of their great national hope. The Apocalyptic books (see Introduction) had encouraged and vitalized the belief in a coming Messiah who would deliver the people from the heathen yoke. Jesus grew up in an atmosphere filled with this expectation, and when the time for His great decision came He had to reckon with it. Jewish patriotism was an influence to which no Jewish child could be indifferent.

4. Home. Jesus belonged to a working-class family, and probably the house was a very simple one, made of baked clay. It had a flat roof where the family slept, and very little furniture. The beds were mats and easily carried about. It was in the simple household life Jesus found many of His illustrations and stories, the leaven fermenting in bread, the patching of worn clothes which were so patched that to mend them any more would be impossible, the grinding of the handmill, the lighting of the lamp at evening. But more important than these things was the influence of the home.

There was the gracious spirit of Mary, not a "miraculous Queen of Heaven" but a sweet, good, loving mother to whom Jesus must have owed much and to whom He must have paid much in loyal service. There were the younger brothers and sisters who were in some ways the severest discipline of Jesus' youth. Was it because they were so little in sympathy with His ideals that He learned first that "a prophet is not without honour save in his own country and his own house"? But these three things, the responsibility of the upkeep of the home, the influence of Mary, and perhaps the lack of sympathy from His brothers and sisters, were the contribution the home made to the training of Jesus.

5. *Education.* The Jews set a high value on education. It was compulsory, and schools flourished all over Palestine. "The world is only saved by the breath of the school-children," "a scholar is greater than a prophet," "Jerusalem was destroyed because the instruction of the young was neglected": these are some Jewish sayings. The school was generally held in the local synagogue, the teacher was the "minister" or beadle, and the one text-book was the Old Testament. Girls were taught by their mothers at home. Jewish education had two characteristics—it was religious and it was practical. That is to say, it aimed at teaching a child the faith of his fathers and at preparing him for practical life by giving him a trade. All children had to learn a trade. Paul, for example, though a great scholar and destined to be a teacher, was taught the trade of a tent-maker, by which he supported himself. Jesus learned His father's trade of a carpenter (Mark 6³). But of more importance was the knowledge He early gained of the Old Testament. How well He

knew His Bible we can see from His use of it later in controversy, for illustration and to meet temptation. The synagogue played a great part in the religious training of Jesus, for there He heard the Scriptures read and there He learned early to lift up His heart in prayer.

6. Thus we can see the growing boy, looking out from His home on the scenes of His people's past ; absorbing the glorious traditions of their greatness and the splendid utterances of their leaders and teachers, psalmist and prophet and statesman ; working hard to support the home ; gazing on the multi-coloured life of the great roads ; and retiring quietly to the hillsides to think and to dream and to pray. And all the time He was learning and growing. He did not possess miraculous knowledge about matters like science. He shared the ideas of His own day about all such things. But what He did know better than anyone else was about His Heavenly Father. And this knowledge grew in depth and fullness as He became older. The religion of His day was in many ways unsatisfying (see Introduction), but He found His own way to the heart of the Bible and to the secret of fellowship with God. The result is visible in the character of the Boy. He grew in mind and in goodness, "in favour with God and Man." The strength He drew from His faith is seen in His quiet patient submission to His parents' authority, and the life of steadfast obedience to the will of His Father. "The chief lesson which Nazareth teaches to us is the possibility of a pure home and a spotless youth in the very face of the evil world " (G. A. Smith, *Hist. Geog.*).

Expression Work. Let the children draw, or make, an Eastern house, or write an account of Jesus as a boy.

III. THE CALL OF JESUS

VOCATION

ST. LUKE 2⁴¹⁻⁵⁰

A. For the Teacher

1. This is the one incident recorded of Jesus' boyhood, but it is in the highest degree significant. I have entitled the Lesson "The Call of Jesus" because that is the real meaning of the story. How early Jesus became aware in the fullest sense of His divine mission is a question much disputed. But at any rate it is clear from His first recorded words that at twelve years of age He was aware that He was in the world to do something for God and also of a relationship with God of a definite kind. I am satisfied that the A.V. translation is the correct one, "about my Father's business"; and, though the full sense of His Sonship came later, it seems evident that already Jesus was conscious of a special and intimate relation to God. It is this sense of being chosen and commissioned for some service that is anyone's real "call."

2. For this reason the Teacher is apt to present Jesus in an unnatural light. It is, for example, a grave mistake to teach children that "Jesus was preaching to the doctors in the Temple." He was, as has been said, a natural boy, intellectually curious and astonishingly "wise," but, like the best of healthy children, always asking questions. It is this picture of a thoughtful boy wanting to know about things, seizing the opportunity of being in the presence of learned men, that is to be presented to the children.

3. Jesus in the Temple. "We know that it was the

practice of the Sanhedrims . . . to come out upon the Sabbath and feast days on ‘the terrace of the Temple,’ and there publicly teach and expound, the utmost liberty being given of asking questions, discussing, objecting, and otherwise taking intelligent part in these lectures” (Edersheim quoted in *Local Colour of the Bible*, Vol. III, p. 22).

B. Notes

Verse 42. *twelve years.* At 12 a Jewish boy became a “son of the Law,” i.e. reached what we should call “confirmation” age. Boys develop quicker in the East.

Verse 43. *tarried:* inadvertently, preoccupied.

Verse 44. *company.* Inhabitants of the same district would travel to the feasts together.
a day's journey. Probably Joseph thought Jesus would be with the women, Mary that He would be with the men.

Verse 46. *three days.* One day out, then (when the child was missed) one day back and on the third the finding of Jesus.

in the Temple. Probably on the Terrace where the rabbis gave public instruction (see A).

hearing and asking. The apocryphal gospel of the Infancy represents Jesus as instructing the “doctors” in the statutes of the Law, in the mysteries of the prophets, and in astronomy, medicine, physics and metaphysics (Plummer).

Verse 47. *understanding.* His intelligence not supernatural, but what was seen later in all His utterances, the fruit of the “wisdom” in which He grew.

Verse 49. *about my Father's business:* R.V. translates “in my Father's House.” The literal Greek is

"in the things of my Father." The A.V. seems to be a reasonable rendering. However, Moffatt and most modern scholars have the R.V. translation. In any case the meaning is not very different.

C. *The Lesson*

1. This seems to be a lesson in which the analytic method of Herbart is useful. The point of contact may be a boy's first visit to a great city. The wonder of it all. The crowds, the buildings, and (if it be a capital) the historic associations. In Jesus' case the city rich with the story of the past; and in and around the city at Passover-time would be over a million people, from all quarters, dressed in varied garments. A memorable time! especially to such an intelligent and inquiring boy.

2. *Presentation.* The steps are very clear.

(1) *The Journey.* Eighty miles—the company of people, many of them known to each other—camping out at nights—a great holiday! singing the "pilgrim songs" (Ps. 121–132). Just outside Jerusalem they would sing Psalm 121: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills."

(2) *In the City.* Its position on the hills—Passover-time—meaning of the feast—worship and sight-seeing—Jesus often in the Temple—the awakening of His soul—what God was to Him—the glorious ritual of the Temple service.

(3) *The Departure.* Jesus preoccupied—full of His great experiences—not missed at first—at the end of the day Mary anxious to see Him—not to be found.

(4) *The Return.* The anxious search—in friends' houses—on the streets—found in the Temple!

(5) *Jesus and His Mother.* The question and Jesus' memorable answer, His first recorded words. This is the real climax of the story, and the lesson should stop here. The verses about His going down to Nazareth and being obedient are another lesson altogether, unless *this* be taken as the climax and the aim of the lesson be to teach, not the call of Jesus but His submission to His parents.

3. Jesus was not the only one thus to be made sensible of a divine "call." All the prophets had this experience (Moses, Samuel, Isaiah). Similarly every man or woman who has done anything for the world has had a sense of being "sent." Joan of Arc had this. So had Florence Nightingale, whose whole career is stamped with this mark of God's choice. The same is true of Fra Angelico. The life of nearly every famous man will furnish illustration.

4. The object of a religious lesson is never attained if one leaves the truth of it in the air, where it would be if we left the impression that only *great* men are "called." What interest is that to the child? Therefore show him that *he* is called, that God sends us all into the world to do what we can for it, and that an artisan, a servant-maid and a preacher are all equally doing God's work and fulfilling His purpose. Get the children to tell you what it means to be "about our Father's business." They will give you plenty of examples from their own daily experience.

Expression Work. This incident lends itself to dramatic treatment. But, if it is felt to be too delicate a matter to represent Jesus, the expression work can take the form of a drawing of the Temple, showing the Terrace where Jesus was.

IV. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

CONSECRATION

ST. MARK 1¹⁻¹¹

A. For the Teacher

1. So far as the ministry of Jesus is concerned, this is the most important event in the Gospel story. There is not a page of the Gospels that can be understood until the significance of the Baptism is grasped. For here Jesus received His consecration to His task, and His equipment for it. Two things happened to Him : (1) the full realization of His unique Sonship which was the source of all His peace and endurance, and (2) the endowment with power by the Spirit. This endowment was the secret of His character, of His teaching and of His power to work miracles,—all came from the Spirit of God in Him, so that *everything* in Jesus' life goes back to the Baptism for its explanation and source.

2. *The Signs.* Were the phenomena (the opened heavens, the dove, the voice) actual objective signs, or pictorial embodiments of an inward vision ? The latter probably. Note that Mark's account (the earliest) represents them as appearing to Jesus alone. He, then, must have told the story of what happened. And we know He related such spiritual experiences in a pictorial manner. The Temptation is another instance. God does not dwell above the sky, He is everywhere. He does not speak out of the heavens, He speaks in our minds. The signs at the Baptism were a beautiful expression of the inward experience of Jesus, the voice in His heart which said once for all, “Thou art My Son,” so that Jesus never lost this blessed assurance,

and the dove-like Spirit of love (in contrast to John's severity) which gave Him the power for all His achievement.

3. The Scene. The wilderness of Judæa lies between the plateau of Judæa and the low Jordan valley. It is 35 miles long by 15 broad. There is a vivid description of it in Sir George Adam Smith's *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, pp. 312-17. "In the Old Testament this land is called Jeshimon, a word meaning *devastation*, and no term could better describe its haggard crumbling appearance . . . short bushes, thorns and succulent creepers were all that relieved the brown and yellow bareness of the sand, the crumbling limestone and scattered shingle. The strata were contorted ; ridges ran in all directions ; distant hills to north and south looked like gigantic dust-heaps ; those near we could see to be torn as if by waterspouts . . . and this chaos, which we had traversed, tumbled and broke down 1,200 feet of lime-stone, flint and marl—crags, corries and precipices—to the broad beach of the water. . . . Here John was prepared for his austere mission and found his figures of judgment. Here you understand his own description of his preaching—like a desert fire where the brown grass and thorns on the more fertile portions will blaze for miles, and the unclean reptiles will creep out of their holes before the heat : *O generation of vipers, who hath taught you to flee from the wrath to come?* and here our Lord suffered His temptation. *Straightway the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness.* For hours, as you travel down these hills, you may see no sign of life, except the scorpions and vipers which your passage startles, in the distance a few wild goats and gazelles, and at night the wailing of the jackal and the hyena's howl. *He was alone with the wild beasts.*"

B. Notes

Verse 2. The actual quotation is a combination of Isaiah (40³ in the Septuagint) and Malachi 3¹ (not correctly). The reference is to a custom of eastern kings to send a "fore-runner" to make the journey easy for them by removing obstacles.

Verse 5. wide-spread revival.

Verse 6. John like Elijah (2 Kings 1⁸). His food was "wilderness food." Locusts eaten only by very poor, the legs and wings stripped off and the rest roasted. "The Bedouins of Arabia and of East Jordan land eat many locusts, roasted, boiled or baked in cakes." Bruce thinks that the honey was vegetable honey, exuding from trees, not bee honey which was a delicacy.

Verses 7, 8. Mark softens the severe aspect of John's words which Matthew gives more strongly. In Matthew the Coming One was to be a fierce Judge whose baptism was to be fire. Nothing about fire here.

Verses 9–11. *in those days.* Luke gives us the definite note of time (3¹).

C. The Lesson

We have heard nothing of Jesus for eighteen years, since the incident in Jerusalem. During all that time Jesus had lived in Nazareth working as a carpenter and looking after His mother and brothers and sisters. But something more had been going on. Remember His saying to His mother, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" There were two things in that saying: (1) His sense of a mission, something great for which He had been sent into the world, and (2) a sense of His special relation to God, His Sonship. During these eighteen years these two things had be-

come clearer. He had learned what His Sonship meant and He had learned more plainly what it was He was to do in the world. And now the signal was given that His time was come to go out to do His great work. John's revival preaching was the signal, and it brought something great and wonderful to Jesus. What that was we are now to see.

1. *The Baptist.* Sketch his history. His life spent in the wilderness of Judæa brooding over the great promises of the past and the evil condition of things in the present. His appearance, clothing and food. The scene of his ministry (see under *A*) ; the crowds ; a great revival.

2. *The Baptism.* John's message, "Repent." Why ? Because of the coming judgment. The people's minds full of a Coming One, the great Deliverer promised of old. This Coming One was to be a Judge, John said, and the only way to escape the judgment was repentance. This, the meaning of the baptism with water. A symbol of cleansing and forgiveness. John's message : (1) The Messiah is at hand, (2) Be ready for Him. John the Forerunner, to make the way ready for the Coming One, to prepare the soil for His great sowing.

3. *The Baptism of Jesus.* Why Jesus came to it, John's ministry was the signal to Jesus. But it was more. John's baptism was for *sinners*. Was Jesus a sinner ? No. Why then was He baptized ? Because He was to make Himself one with His brethren. One great secret of Jesus' ministry was that He identified Himself with humanity. "He was made in all points like us." This is seen in His Cross above all, but all through His life also, and now, at the beginning of His ministry.

What happened at His baptism? Two things. (1) A great and wonderful vision of God as His own Father in a unique sense. He was the Beloved Son. This came to Him now with a clearness, depth and assurance greater than ever before, *and it never left Him.* This was the secret of His peace and happiness and endurance all through to the end. Not a page of the Gospels can be understood without this.

(2) An endowment with power by the Spirit of God. This a gift such as He had never before been conscious of. *And in this lies the secret of all His achievement afterwards.* The Spirit in Him was the source of His power to work miracles, of His perfect holiness, and of His teaching. Children feel Jesus' example of no use to them "because He could not do evil." A wrong view. His goodness, like everything else in Him, due to the Spirit in Him. And the same Spirit is open to us.

This then was the outfit Jesus got for His work in the world—this sense of sonship and this gift of power.

Expression Work. Gather together all the verses in the Gospels which speak of the Spirit in Jesus and what it did for Him.

V. THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

ST. MATTHEW 4¹⁻¹¹

A. For the Teacher

1. *Source of the Narrative.* It could only have come from Jesus Himself, obviously. Probably it was part of the private instruction which He gave His disciples in the course of His systematic training of them for their future work (see Lesson VII).

2. *The Narrative symbolical.* The experience related here was one that occurred in the soul of Jesus. The incidents are pictorial representations of spiritual realities. It was impossible, for example, to see all the kingdoms of the world from any hill in Palestine. The vision was one in Jesus' mind. It was our Lord's custom to represent spiritual realities in pictorial form (cf. His Parables, and also the experience at His baptism). This does not affect the reality of the event, of course.

3. This lesson can only be given *in detail* to older children. When given to younger children it ought to be treated very generally with examples of the temptations of that age. The lesson that follows is for the senior classes, but it can easily be adapted to juniors by omission of the difficult elements.

B. Notes

Verse 1. “*led.*” Mark has “driven.”

“*wilderness.*” The same region as at the Baptism (Lesson IV).

“*tempted*”: literally “*tested.*” This is the meaning here.

Verse 4. *Jesus' replies* are taken from a part of Deuteronomy which was taught to Jewish children. Very significant.

Verse 5. *Pinnacle.* A part of the Temple overlooking a precipice.

Verse 6. Satan's quotation is from Psalm 91.

Verse 7. Jesus' reply not addressed to Satan but to Himself, an answer to the suggestion of presumption.

“No one must force the hand of God, put Him wrongly to the proof.” God's care is promised not to presumption but to the loyalty of quiet obedience.

Verse 8. *Mountain* : “not to be sought in terrestrial geography.”

the world. The Devil points to a universal empire which Jesus can achieve by *Satan's help*, i.e. by ambition, by force, an empire of power.

Verse 10. Jesus would not be the Christ of popular expectation but of God's purpose, a very different thing.

Verse 11. *leaveth Him* : “for a season,” says Luke. It is certain that the same temptation was repeated over and over again in the ministry of Jesus, e.g. when the people desired to make Him a king, when Peter rebuked Him and suggested an easy way (Matt. 16^{22, 23}), and in Gethsemane.

C. *The Lesson*

1. *How Jesus came to be tempted.* (1) He was led by the Spirit. Therefore temptation is not in itself evil. A great chance to do children a service by showing this. Many young people are tortured by the idea that their temptations are already sin.

(2) Why was He “led up”? To be *tested*. Every thing has to be tested before we can use it, e.g. bridges, aeroplanes.

(3) What was to be tested? What He had received at His baptism (recapitulate). Thus there were three things given Him at His baptism—a unique sense of *sonship*, an endowment of *power*, and a clear perception of a great *mission*. What did these gifts *mean*? What kind of ministry was He to exercise? How was He to use His power? What did His sonship mean? All this had to be decided. The people expected a great Deliverer—was He to be this kind of leader? A great conflict in His soul.

2. The Two Ways. God's or the Devil's.

There were two ways put before Jesus' mind. All these temptations were different forms of the same alternative. *1st Temptation* came to His sense of power. He was weak and hungry. Could He use His power to satisfy His own need? Why not? We must live! But Jesus saw that power was given Him for others, for His service of others. And His answer was, "It is not necessary that the *body* should live. It is necessary that the *soul* should live" ("man doth not live, etc."). This means that it is not necessary to live, but it is necessary to do right. Dr. R. J. Campbell tells of a working man who was dismissed from his job because he refused to tell a lie. The family was in dire straits, but the son, who told the story, said they were proud of their father and would not sacrifice their peace of conscience for any reward. (In presenting this to little children the obvious form is "selfishness or unselfishness" in the choice of any good thing.)

2nd Temptation addressed to the sense of *Sonship*. "If a Son, then in God's care, whatever you do. Appeal to Him in a way that will show the people that you are God's Son." Why was this wrong? Because God never promises His protection to those who demand miracles for their safety but only to those who are going quietly along the way of duty. Jesus was to convince the world not by marvels but by His life of love. *This* was the life of Sonship. If we pray for healing and neglect the doctor we are doing just what Jesus refused to do. God is in medicine and not in unnecessary miracles.

3rd Temptation addressed to His sense of having a *mission*. What was His mission? To win the world to God. And Satan suggested a way of achieving this

—a good end by bad means ! If only He would adopt the hopes and expectations of the people and come out as a worldly conqueror He would win their support. This was the temptation Mohammed yielded to. But Jesus saw the real way to win the world was by the way of love. This has been proved true. It is by His cross Jesus has won His world-wide empire.

Summarize. All these temptations are forms of one and the same. *God's way*, with His power, His sonship. His mission, or the Devil's ? Parallels are to be found in Moses (Heb. 11²⁴⁻²⁷), John Cairns who refused the Principalship of Edinburgh University in order to remain a simple preacher of the Gospel), Charles Wesley (who refused the offer of adoption by a rich relative to remain a Wesleyan minister).

3. Reality of Jesus' Temptation. Children imagine that Jesus was not *really* tempted like us, because He was divine. Show that it was real and that He did not call on His divine nature at all to help Him, but met His temptation as we must meet ours. Our temptations (to selfishness, to lying, to cheating, to shirking) are just forms of the same temptation. *Jesus is one of us.*

4. How Temptation is overcome. The secret of victory is seen here. Temptation overcome, *not by fighting it*, but by having in our life, our mind, something stronger and better than the evil suggested. Take a parallel from health. We resist disease and infection not by fighting it but by having a healthy body (value of fresh air and sunshine and food). Jesus did not overcome merely by quoting Scripture. It was because what was in the Scripture was in His mind and heart that He overcame. All the passages He quoted were in a part of Scripture that was taught to Jewish children. The

love of God was strong in Him and this proved stronger than the evil. Evil cannot harm us if our hearts are garrisoned by love of God, by prayer, by good books, by good friends, by the habit of good thoughts.

Expression Work. 1. Find out the parts of Scripture Jesus quoted, and the parts the Devil quoted. 2. What are the temptations in *our* lives parallel to those in this story?

VI. OUTLINE OF THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

At this point it is useful, if not indeed necessary, that the teacher should have a bird's-eye view of the earthly life of Jesus, in order that incidents may fall into their proper place. The question has indeed been raised whether any chronological scheme is possible. Rawlinson, in his Commentary on St. Mark, and Middleton Murry, in his life of Jesus, concur in saying that the incidents in the Gospels are detached and that no orderly arrangement is possible. This seems to be extreme. There are focal points, like the Baptism and the scene at Cæsarea Philippi, and there are two other obvious divisions of the ministry, the time of popularity and the time of opposition. This gives some support for the ordinary division into three stages, the year of obscurity, the year of popularity, and the year of opposition (see Stalker's *Life of Jesus*). The events in the Gospels can be arranged easily within this scheme. But perhaps a more definite outline would be more useful, and I take the following from the Rev. C. S. Woodward's *Jesus among the Children*.

1. *From the Birth to the Baptism* (a great deal of help can be got in Glover's *Jesus of History*).

2. *The Baptism to the beginning of the Galilean Ministry*; the Temptation, the first disciples, the first miracle.

3. *The Galilean Ministry*; eighteen months. Capernaum the centre; call of Disciples; Sermon on the Mount; Teaching by Parables; Crowds; the Crisis. Why many left Him.

4. *The Training of the Twelve*. The last summer; mainly spent in retirement outside Palestine; in Phœnicia, in Decapolis, in the territory of Philip. The climax in Peter's confession and the Transfiguration.

5. *On the way to Jerusalem*, the last six months before the Crucifixion. The gradual approach to the Cross; three visits to Jerusalem recorded in St. John 7 to 11.

6. *Last Visit to Jerusalem*, the last fortnight; the Passover week and its incidents; ending in the Crucifixion.

7. *The Resurrection and Ascension.*

This seems to me a good and intelligible outline. The teacher may wish, however, to work out his own, and that would be best of all.

NOTE.—Use a good wall map of Palestine if this outline is given as a lesson to the older pupils.

VII. JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES

St. John 1³⁵⁻⁵¹; St. Matthew 4¹⁸⁻²² and St. Luke 5¹⁻¹¹; St. Mark 3¹³⁻¹⁹ with 6⁷⁻¹³ and St. Matthew 10¹⁻⁸

A. For the Teacher

1. The relation of Jesus to His disciples is one subject, though the details are scattered about in the Gospels.

The teacher ought to make one lesson of it, especially for older children, because it is one of the outstanding features of His Ministry.

2. The main fact in the later ministry was the training of the twelve. Jesus saw that His preaching had failed. He foresaw the inevitable end and set Himself to prepare for it by carefully instructing the disciples so that when He was gone they could carry on His work and establish His Kingdom. What an extraordinary confidence this displays ! Jesus more and more withdrew from the crowds in order to find time to teach His followers.

3. The most amazing fact in the Gospels is the way these men passed from simple admiration at the beginning to *worship* at the end. This is the most powerful of all proofs of the greatness, the holiness and the divinity of Jesus Christ. The change took place because of the ceaseless influence of *what Jesus was*.

B. Notes

John i. 38. *rabbi*: literally, "my greatness" (cf. "His Majesty" and for the "my" monsieur, madame) translated here "teacher."

Verse 39. *tenth hour*: four in the afternoon. John recalls the hour because it was so memorable an event. The day reckoned from 6 to 6.

Verse 45. *Nathanael*. This is probably the "Bartholomew" of the Gospels. Reasons: (1) because here and in 21² he is classed with the Apostles; (2) in the lists of the Apostles Bartholomew is coupled with Philip; (3) while Nathanael is never mentioned by the earlier Gospels, Bartholomew is never mentioned by John; and (4) Bartholomew is not a name but a description, "the son of Tolmai."

Verse 46. *Can any good . . . :* i.e. an obscure village like Nazareth. Nathanael came from a neighbouring village, Cana, and there may have been some jealousy in the question.

Verse 51. Cf. Gen. 28¹², etc. "What Jacob dreamt was in Christ realized" (Dods).

Matthew iv. 19. *Follow Me.* "Imperial yet kindly." First word of the Galilean ministry.

Verse 20. This action presupposes previous acquaintance.

Verse 21. *With Zebedee.* The father working, so the brothers not very old.

Luke v. 5. Success was doubly improbable. It was *day* and in *deep water*. Fish are usually got at night and near shore (Bruce).

Verse 7. *beckoned*: fishers accustomed to use signs to preserve needed stillness (Bruce).

Verse 8. Note the impression Jesus made, the effect of His presence.

Mark iii. 13. *mountain*: not any particular hill meant but the hill country along the shore of the lake.

Verse 14. Two objects in calling disciples: (1) to be with Him, for *training*; and (2) to be sent out to preach and carry on Jesus' work.

Verse 17. *Boanerges*: an Aramaic word, showing that this was the language Jesus habitually spoke.

Verse 19. *Iscariot*: supposed (but not certainly) to be "the man of Kerioth" in Judæa. Judas the only Judæan in the band.

Mark vi. An account of the first experimental mission on which the partially trained apostles were sent, a very important historical event, the beginning of the Church.

Verse 8. *no scrip, no bread*: rather “no bread, no wallet.” A wallet was a beggar’s collecting bag.

Matthew x. 5, 6. This injunction implies that at a future date the Gospel *would* go beyond Israel. The injunction for the present due partly to the “crude religious state of the disciples” (Bruce) and partly to Jesus’ deliberate policy of concentration.

Verse 12. It was a house mission, not in synagogues, conversation with individuals.

Verse 13. The meaning is that a peaceful word at least blesses the speaker if not the audience.

Verse 14. Not in anger but laying the responsibility of the refusal of God’s message on the right shoulders.

C. *The Lesson*

Jesus is now *prepared* for His ministry, by the endowment at His baptism and by the testing of this endowment at His temptation. He goes out to the work of His life, and the first thing He does is to call disciples. Why did He do this? For the same reason that all great leaders have done so, e.g. philosophers (Epicurus, Plato), religious leaders (Mohammed, St. Francis, St. Dominic). The reason, to leave behind those who would *carry on* the cause. The Gospels show us how Jesus did this. They reveal the *three stages* of discipleship. At the first stage, acquaintances; at the second, pupils; at the third, helpers.

1st Stage. Acquaintances only. John 1³⁵⁻⁵¹. (1) Jesus got His first followers from John the Baptist. They came to Jesus because they found in Him something John could not give. Note well the noble spirit of the Baptist when he saw his disciples leaving him for Jesus (John 3³⁰). (2) The number increases by *personal influence*. One brings another. So always.

The great honour of being a link between some one and Jesus (Andrew and Peter). We may not be great servants of Jesus, but we may lead some to Him who will do work we cannot do. (3) Name the five who came to Jesus now. (4) They only made His acquaintance, and probably went back to their ordinary work. But even a little knowledge of Jesus is important !

2nd Stage. Pupils. Matthew 4¹⁸⁻²², Luke 5¹⁻¹¹. Jesus now formed the nucleus of His band of permanent disciples. (1) Where this happened. The Lake of Galilee. Consult G. A. Smith, *Historical Geography*, for the Lake at this time ; very populous, many villages and towns, much trade, fishing population. The first disciples were fishermen. Age ? probably about His own. Fairly well off, had their own boats and hired servants. (2) They were now "to be with Him," i.e. attached to Him to be trained. They were trained by daily contact with Jesus and by listening to Him, and watching Him. This training became the great feature of Jesus' ministry. As time went on He retired more and more from the crowded districts and went away to secluded parts to get leisure to educate His pupils, e.g. journeys to Phoenicia (Matthew 16¹³ ff.), and to the districts of the ten Greek towns, Decapolis (Mark 7³¹ ff.). This was really the beginning of the Christian Church.

3rd Stage. Helpers. Mark 3, 6, Matthew 10. At this stage Jesus sent them out on experimental journeys, partly to do work for which He had not time, and partly to test their powers against the time when they would have to stand alone. This is the stage of *Apostleship* (difference between Disciple and Apostle ?). It was now Jesus selected twelve out of His numerous followers for the responsible duty of apostleship. (1) Why twelve ?

Perhaps symbolical of Israel. (2) Composition of the band. Note these points : two pairs of brothers ; a Zealot and a tax-gatherer both included ! (a zealot was an ultra-patriot, a man ready for violent revolution to throw off the Roman yoke ; a publican was a servant of the Romans—*both* in Jesus' band !) ; Judas one of the chosen. Did Jesus know he would betray Him ? No. Judas was a promising recruit at first. Significance of this. (3) The band consisted of three concentric circles. In the innermost circle were the intimate friends of Jesus, Peter, James and John. In the middle were those not so near to, and yet not so far from, Jesus, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Matthew. In the outer circle men like Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot, and on the edge Judas. This is a reflection of the Church to-day and always. Indeed in every respect this band is a miniature of the Church, bad and good, mature and immature, every stage of faith and goodness. Just as the acorn becomes the oak, and the source the river, this little band grew into the great Church of Christ that overspreads the world to-day.

Summary. 1. The greatest achievement of Jesus was the *making* of these men. What they have accomplished ! But all their greatness was due to Jesus. He made them what they became. 2. The fact mentioned in *A 3* that these men passed from simple attraction to *worship* through the influence of Jesus was the greatest proof of the divinity of Jesus.

Expression Work. 1. What is the difference between Disciple and Apostle ? Illustrate by reference to the followers of Jesus. 2. Find out what you can about the members of the band of Twelve.

VIII. A DAY IN THE LIFE OF JESUS

ST. MARK 1²¹⁻³⁵

A. For the Teacher

1. It will help children to follow the story of Jesus' ministry to have at the outset a picture of it as a whole. And, fortunately, Mark gives us such a summary in his first chapter. It sets Jesus before us in all the sides of His life. The aim, then, is to give a sketch of the Lord as "He went about doing good." A picture of Jesus—that is the teacher's object.

2. Questions of demoniacal possession and miracle generally are passed over at this point for obvious reasons.

B. Notes

Verse 22. Mark's "realistic gospel" sets the striking personality of Jesus before us by touches like this.

Verse 23. "unclean spirit" is Mark's expression for Matthew's "demon."

Verse 26. The man seems to have been an epileptic.

Verse 27. Mark gives vividly the babble of amazed exclamations: "Whatever is this?" "It's new teaching with authority behind it." "He orders even unclean spirits!" "Yes, and they obey Him!"

Verse 28. "So His fame spread at once in all directions through the whole of the surrounding country of Galilee" (Moffatt). Hence the crowds that gathered at the end of the day.

Verse 32. *When the sun set.* Because it was sabbath they dare not come to be healed till the sabbath

was over, which was at sunset. Sabbath was from Friday at sunset till Saturday at sunset.

Verse 35. "Flight from Capernaum," say Bruce and Holtzmann. Not at all. It was simply the imperative necessity for quiet and prayer.

C. The Lesson

Introduction. If you had gone to school, or to a foreign country, and wanted to write home and describe all about your new life, you would just give an account of a day, any day, from morning to night. That is what Mark does here to help us to understand the life of Jesus. Here is one of His days. It was when He was in Capernaum after He had called His disciples. And it was a Sabbath day. Picture the quiet town, all work laid aside. Everybody going to church. And Jesus begins the day in church about nine o'clock.

1. *In the Synagogue.* Synagogue the Jewish place of worship. There was only one temple, but there was a synagogue wherever there were Jews throughout the world. A very simple building, like a hall, with seats, a platform, with a lectern, a cabinet for the rolls of Scripture, and lamps. The synagogue at Capernaum was built by the Roman officer (St. Luke 7). He would be present, and Jairus (who was a ruler of the synagogue) and perhaps his little daughter. Jesus was always present in the synagogue on the sabbath. It was "His custom." The service was like a Presbyterian service to-day, except that there was no singing. It was the custom to ask any stranger present to read the Scripture and give an address. And Jesus did so on this occasion. The effect was remarkable. Such teaching as His was new. It was new because it was simple, and because Jesus spoke with calm assurance (He *knew*),

and because He gave a wonderful message about God.

This, then, was the first thing in Jesus' ministry, His *Teaching*. He came to give us truth, about God and about salvation. He was the greatest teacher the world has ever seen, and His teaching has changed the whole life of man. It is teaching "with authority" and we are bound to try to obey it.

The service interrupted by the shouting of a madman. Jesus quieted him, and this incident (along with the novelty of His teaching) brought multitudes together later on.

2. *In the Home.* The fever patient. Fever was common in this low-lying marshy region. Jesus' cure of the patient. The first of many. But the point now is that here is another feature of Jesus' ministry. He is the *Healer*. His healing miracles were just a part of His Gospel. They showed God's pity for the troubled and His power to meet their need; God's love and power coming through the healing acts of Jesus.

3. *In the City.* When the sun had set the sabbath was past and people could safely come to seek Jesus' help. The crowds. Describe the different patients, blind, paralysed, diseased, possessed. A great crowd besieging the doors of Peter's house! And Jesus answered their requests for help. It must have been very tiring. But here we see a great feature in Jesus' ministry, *His all-sufficient grace*. No need was beyond Him, and none were turned away! The Helper of humanity in all its troubles.

4. *Alone.* When Jesus was tired He had one great resource—Prayer. And so very early He went away to be alone with God. This is still another part of a

true picture of Jesus—the *Man of Prayer*. He fell back on this as Wellington fell back on Torres Vedras, from which to issue forth to victory; as Abraham Lincoln betook himself to prayer “because he had nowhere else to go to.” This is the real “secret of Jesus,” the secret of all His power and courage and peace.

5. Here then is the picture of the life that we are going to study. You see Him in the Church, in the Home and in the City, and in all leaving traces of His kindness and power. To-day it is the same. It is not enough to think of Jesus in the church. He must be in the home also, and in the city. In what ways are His presence and influence seen in each? in the church? in the home? in the city?

Expression Work. 1. Find passages about the prayers of Jesus. 2. Find references to His presence at church. 3. Describe the ways in which the Gospel can, and should, influence the life of the city to-day.

IX. THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

A distinguished scholar, writing recently in defence of Modernism in the Church, says that Modernists do not deny that miracles are possible. They treat the question as one of evidence, but that in every case of supposed miracle the evidence has proved defective. This is an innocent piece of self-deception. Modernists, for the most part, refuse miracles simply because they are unable to believe in them. They would, for example, deny that Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes, and yet the historical evidence for that miracle is as great as for any part in the Gospel story. It is in all the Gospels, and it is in the earliest stratum of the Gospels.

Now, the trouble is that very many educated people, like teachers, have exactly the same feeling as I have just attributed to the Modernist. They find themselves unable to believe in at least some of the miracles. This difficulty is felt chiefly in regard to the "nature" miracles, like the turning of water into wine, and the walking on the sea.

There are, it seems to me, two things that explain this mental attitude. One is the scientific temper of our age. We have come to look on Nature as a system of cause and effect so rigid that it cannot be broken or changed. After all sorts of argumentation the mind comes back to Matthew Arnold's dictum, "Miracles don't happen." We might argue that they *do*. Or we might argue that this is no reason for asserting that they did not happen formerly for special reasons. But the grip which the scientific spirit has on our minds makes it difficult for us to believe that water can in a moment be turned into wine. The other explanation of our mental attitude is the modern emphasis on the humanity of Jesus. We have all been exclusively concerned with the "historic Jesus," i.e. the Jesus of the Synoptists, or the supposed Jesus of the Synoptists. It has been the human Jesus, the Teacher, the Friend, limited in His knowledge, limited in His power, but full of love, a real Son of God, a unique Son of God, but—not the Eternal Son, not God of God, not the "Second Person of the Blessed Trinity." The stream of literature which treats Jesus as a unique Man has been so constant that, playing on the minds of this generation, it has created a point of view from which miracle seems an anachronism.

Now, I am not here dealing with any particular miracle, and certainly I am not asserting that all the

New Testament miracles are miracles, but I would like to remind teachers of two things: (1) The general *a priori* argument against miracle is being rapidly dissolved. The universe is not a cage of iron cause and effect in which the Creator is imprisoned. He is surely as free as we are to use and modify nature, and *we do* it every day. But, (2) and more important, the question of miracle generally in the New Testament is bound up with our view of the Person of Christ. Was Jesus Christ God in the flesh? Do we believe, not in *an* Incarnation, but, in *the* Incarnation? Do we worship Christ? If the answer is "Yes," then we shall expect that God in the flesh would do wonderful things. This does not guarantee any particular miracle. But it brings us to the incident without that mental inability to believe in miracle of which I have written. The really important question for any teacher of the New Testament is "What think ye of Christ?"

There is no difficulty to-day about the healing miracles. Even so radical a writer as Mr. Murry admits that Jesus did things that doctors will never be able to explain. It is the "nature" miracles that are the difficulty. But it ought to be remembered about *all* Jesus did that it was part of His Gospel. His miracles were part of His message. They were not wonders done to show His power. They were acts of mercy for man's need because this need was in the presence of divine love and divine sufficiency. Let it not be forgotten that the Gospel miracles are part of the ministry of Jesus and of His revelation of God.

One word more. If teachers find the "nature" miracles difficult of belief, let them realize that the important thing for them to do is to teach the truth embodied in the miracle. That is as true of the New

Testament as it was of the Old Testament. The truth in a narrative may often be quite honestly taught by a teacher who is unable to accept the miraculous element in it. Or an aspect of the narrative can be taught in one particular case when the general truth is sufficiently illustrated in other directions. As an example of this I have taught the feeding of the 5,000 round the incident of the boy with the loaves and fishes. (See Lesson XXII.)

X. THE CENTURION AND HIS SERVANT

FAITH

ST. LUKE 7¹⁻¹⁰

A. For the Teacher

1. At this time the traditional polytheism of Rome had lost its hold on educated minds. The stories of the gods were no longer credited, and the educated were left without a religious faith. In these circumstances, many were attracted to the Jewish synagogue where they found a pure religion that satisfied their needs. They were adherents of the Jewish faith and worshipped with the Jews though not full "members." The pagan centurion belonged to this class.

2. Galilee was a province of Rome which had self-government and was ruled (under Rome) by its own king, Herod Antipas. But Rome kept a military force to assert its authority, and the centurion was the commander of the local company (see Introduction).

3. Capernaum was the city from which Jesus set out on His tours of Galilee, and to which He returned, and where He stayed, probably in Peter's home. The

centurion must, therefore, often have seen Him, and perhaps heard Him in the synagogue, and in any case knew all about His wonderful deeds.

B. Notes

Verse 2. *centurion*: a commander of a centuria, a century, or company of a hundred men. He was an army captain.

servant: what we call a "batman." The Great War has shown how intimate the relation may be between an officer and his personal servant. They had perhaps been through great perils together. Hence the captain's affection.

Verse 3. *elders of the Jews*. Probably elders of the city, the "city fathers."

Verse 4. *instantly*: i.e. eagerly.

Verse 5. *hath built*. . . . See *A 1*.

Verse 8. The point is missed by our version. Moffatt rightly translates: "For though I am a man under authority myself, I have soldiers under me; I tell one man to go, and he goes," etc.

C. The Lesson

Here is an interesting story about what Jesus thought of a foreigner and his faith.

1. *What kind of man was he?* He was a *captain* in the Roman Army (see Introduction). He was a *humane* man, kind to his servant. Many masters were cruel to their servants. They could do what they liked with them. But this man was extraordinarily different. He was also deeply *religious*. Though he was not a Jew but a pagan he believed firmly in the true God. And he was *generous*. To show his gratitude for the help he got in church he had built for the Jews at

Capernaum a new church. This is a very attractive picture and we cannot help liking this army captain.

2. *His Petition to Jesus.* Why did he think of asking Jesus to cure his servant? Because he, like Jesus, lived in Capernaum, and must have heard a great deal about the wonderful things He was doing. Perhaps he saw some of these things narrated in Lesson VII. And he believed that God's power was in Him.

3. *His Message to Jesus.* The elders of the city were glad to help him and went to Jesus to beg Him to go to the captain's house. But when Jesus was on the way He received a message which surprised and delighted Him. It was this. "Do not trouble to come to me. You only need to speak a word and my servant will get better. My commander, the emperor at Rome, speaks a word there and I carry it out here. He does not need to come here to see it done. And I myself speak a word to my servants and they carry it out. I do not need to go and see it done. So you who have the powers of nature under your command only need to say the word and it is done." And Jesus said, "I have not found faith like that anywhere. I have never known faith like that."

4. *What Faith is.* What was the faith like that Jesus praised so highly? What *is* faith? Well, (1) it is *simple*. What this captain did was to give Jesus the faith he was using every day as a soldier. Faith, the essence of a soldier's life. So we. We live by faith every day; in our homes, in business, in friendship, we are *always* using faith. And religious faith is just giving *this* to Jesus. We do not need to wait for something mysterious to come to us called "faith." We only need to give to Jesus the *same faith* we are using all the time. (2) It is real. This man believed in a

God Who *does things*. Very many people believe in a God Who lives up in the skies and *does nothing*. But faith is a faith that believes in a God Who is here in the world and is constantly doing things. On the darkest Sunday of the War, when Earl Haig was going into the church the chaplain asked him if things were as black as rumour made them. He said, "Well, Padre, it is just this, 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.'" That is faith. God was going to make all the difference. Do you believe God makes any difference? And (3) it was *personal*. It was a faith in Jesus. The captain knew little about Jesus. Any scholar to-day knows more. But he believed that *God was in Jesus* and that Jesus was able to help a needy man. And that is faith. If you believe that about Jesus you are a Christian however little you know about Him. Faith is having confidence that Jesus is able to help.

Expression Work. 1. Find what Jesus says in the Gospels about faith. 2. Find all the references to soldiers in the New Testament.

XI. THE PARALYTIC

JESUS THE SAVIOUR FROM SIN

ST. MARK 2¹⁻¹²

A. *For the Teacher*

1. The aim of this lesson is to show how Jesus can, and does, deal with *sin*. It is not the miracle that is the centre of interest to *us*, though it was to the crowd. It is the claim of Jesus to forgive sin and to cleanse it

away. This should be in the Teacher's mind throughout. And the lesson affords a good opportunity of making clear a fact of the uttermost ethical value for youth, the close connection between sin and suffering.

2. It seems quite obvious to me that Jesus here makes a very great claim for Himself when He says, "The Son of Man hath power to forgive sin." I cannot follow Bruce when he says that Jesus means "any man can declare that sin is forgiven." Jesus uses the title "Son of Man" of Himself, not of man generally, and uses it with a tremendous meaning in it. Whatever its exact significance it means a unique "Son of Man." The Pharisees evidently understood this when they accused Jesus of blasphemy. They could have made no criticism if Jesus had only meant, "Any man can declare forgiveness," and certainly the accusation of blasphemy would have no point.

3. The teacher ought, of course, to show the children a drawing, or model, of an Eastern house, with its flat roof and outside stair by which the roof could be reached without entering the house. The roof was used as a sitting-room, and sometimes as a sleeping-place. Jesus was standing under the roof of a kind of verandah with the crowd all about Him. The only way to reach Him, therefore, was by the outside stair on to the roof. The bearers "tore up" the mud and tiles to let the man down before Jesus. The man's "bed" also wants a word of explanation. It was a pallet or mat, carried by the four corners, and easily rolled up.

B. Notes

Verse 1. *again*: i.e. after a preaching tour. Jesus' ministry in Galilee consisted of a series of tours

through the towns and villages. He had just got back from one of these.

in the house: R.V. "at home." Possibly Jesus stayed with Peter in Capernaum. We know He had not a home of His own (Matt. 8²⁰).

Verse 6. The scribes and Pharisees were already interested in Jesus, and were there to watch Him. Here we see the first tiny cloud of hostility on the horizon.

Verse 7. They were right of course. Only God can forgive.

Verses 8–11. Jesus' answer is this : Of course it is easy to say "Thy sins are forgiven," but who can tell whether they *are* forgiven ? If, however, I say, "Take up thy bed," that can be seen. And if I am able to do that, surely it is proved that divine power is in me.

C. *The Lesson*

1. Jesus had been away on a tour in Galilee, and when He came "home" again to Capernaum a great crowd collected to hear Him preach. They loved to listen to such fresh and helpful words as His.

2. The discourse was suddenly interrupted by an unusual incident. Describe the house, with flat roof and outside stair, the crowd about the door, Jesus under the roof of verandah. The paralytic's friends and their persistence. The man lowered before Jesus. Was Jesus annoyed ? No, this kind of persistence pleased Him (story of Bartimæus and that of the Syro-Phœnician woman) and always got its reward.

3. But here is a surprise for the people and the paralytic's friends. They came for a cure, but Jesus said to the man, "Thy sins are forgiven." Why ?

Because Jesus knew two things. One was that the paralysis (explain) was due to sin. The disease was caused by wrongdoing. And the other was that the man knew this and felt deeply his sinfulness and longed for pardon. (Note Jesus' words to him, "Be of good cheer," in Matthew.) And so the *man* had to be set right first with God and his conscience.

4. Sin always brings suffering of some kind, *always*. The teacher knows any number of instances. A drunkard's health and home and conscience, for example, all destroyed. But the same is true of the slightest sin. Tell some dramatic instance like the story of Tito Melema in George Eliot's *Romola*, or that of Heine who was stretched on a bed of suffering for eight years as the result of evil-doing. Here are two sayings of famous men about this: "nature sends in the bill; it always must be met, and there is never any discount," said Professor Drummond. "Remember that every sin will be bitterness in the end," said Robert Murray McCheyne.

5. But just here is the great message of the Christian Gospel that Christ can deal with sin, that He forgives the penitent and that He can break the *power* of evil in us. This is the one vital thing in the New Testament, the forgiveness of sin through Christ, and the power of God to give us victory over it. This story tells us that the power of God was in Jesus both to pardon this poor man and to make him strong again. Jesus said so, and He proved it. And if we accept His word, we too will know its truth.

Expression Work. Draw a picture of an Eastern house.

XII. THE DEMONIAC THE POWER OF JESUS

ST. MARK 5¹⁻²⁰

A. *For the Teacher*

1. There are two difficulties about this lesson. One is the question as to whether the demoniacs of the Gospels were simply madmen (or epileptics) or whether they were possessed by devils or a devil. The former is the modern view, and writers like Professor Bruce simply assume it without discussion. The latter is the orthodox view, upheld with great force by Trench (*Miracles*, pp. 162 ff.). His reasons are (1) the explicit language of Jesus not only *to* the demoniacs but *about* them to His disciples (Matt. 10⁸ and 17²¹). This is not decisive. How else on *any* theory could Jesus have spoken to or about them in view of the prevalent opinions? (2) The reality of a kingdom of evil with a personal head is one of the assured assertions of the New Testament, and of Jesus Himself. This seems to me a powerful argument. The fact that Jesus taught that there is a personal devil, and the fact that this would really explain certain forms of evil, is in some ways a mental relief, and in any case is a serious fact. (3) It is incorrect to say that the phenomenon occurred only in ancient times. Trench gives several modern parallels of a striking similarity to the present case on pp. 172 (note) and 178 (note). (4) The fact that the man was mad is not inconsistent with the possession by an evil spirit. The trouble began with sin, perhaps, and the development of a dual personality laid the man's mind open to the invasion of the evil one.

These are reasons which the teacher should weigh well before rejecting them. In any case here is the point of importance : it was a case of madness, whether reinforced by an evil spirit or not, and it belongs to the kingdom of evil.

2. The second difficulty is about the swine. It will be recalled that Huxley made great play with this "Gadarene pig affair" on the ground that Jesus had no right to destroy another person's property. Writers on this miracle adduce all kinds of reasons to justify the destruction of the swine. These are nearly all absurd and miss the point. But there is no need for any reason at all if the situation is realized. The tale was spread by the swineherds who naturally connected the healing of the demoniac with the conduct of the swine. This was the form in which the story circulated and it has been preserved in this version. There is no question of Jesus either allowing or commanding the demons to enter the swine. There was (as Bruce says) simply a "coincidence between the cure and the catastrophe."

3. There are so many lessons in this narrative that the teacher must be clear about what he is to teach. Obviously the great truth in the story is the Power of Jesus. This ought to be exclusively taught, and not confused with missionary duty or the reasons why people reject the Gospel.

B. Notes

Verse 1. *Gadarenes*: R.V. Gerasenes. Thomson discovered a city Khersa which is now generally regarded as the Gerasa of the incident. There are high hills, caves used as tombs in the hillsides and a steep cliff near at hand going down to the shore.

Verse 2. *Tombs.* Palestine consists largely of limestone rock, and there are caves everywhere which were used as tombs. Cf. the Cave of Machpelah (Gen. 24) and the cave in which Jesus was buried.

Verse 7. "Insanity is much nearer heaven than worldllymindedness : men with shattered reason often felt the spell of Christ, while the strong-minded used their intellect to resist the truth" (Bruce).

Verse 9. *Legion* : a Roman division of 6,000 men. "Some peasants had just dug up the gravestone of a Roman soldier (among the tombs of Gadara). It said that he was of a Legion, the Fourteenth. As I read this last detail—and the word is still stamped on other stones in the neighbourhood—I realized how familiar that engine of foreign oppression had been to this region, so that the poor madman could find nothing fitter than it to describe the incubus upon his own life" (G. A. Smith, *Hist. Geog.*, p. 461).

Verse 20. *Decapolis* : a region of "ten towns" to the south-east of Galilee, a district larger than Galilee with a foreign population.

C. *The Lesson*

1. *The Setting.* The high hills east of the Lake of Galilee with their caves and the steep bluff down to the sea.

2. *The terrible figure of the Madman.* His strength. His wildness. His loneliness. Where he lived. His fierce cruelty. A dreadful picture ! A victim of the power and kingdom of evil.

3. *The Madman and Jesus* (8-9). The spell Jesus cast on him. How children and mad people recognized the greatness of Jesus when the "wise" did not. Something very great in Jesus! How Jesus dealt with him, asked his name. Why? to get his real self to become master over the evil self. "Legion"! The man full of terror of the great Roman power. But Jesus is stronger! The power of Jesus banished the power of evil. The man sane and quiet and gentle! A wonderful work.

4. *Jesus and the People* (10-17). The episode of the swine. The herds flee and tell a garbled story about the devils sending the swine into the sea. The people angry at this. Jesus must go away. He might cure demoniacs, but what if that injured their property?

5. *The Madman and the People* (18-20). The man's request to Jesus. Natural. But Jesus had something better for him to do. The first missionary! This was the proof of his real cure, that he could carry the news of Jesus to others.

6. *The Power of Jesus to-day.* His greatest work is to free us from bondage to evil. Bad habits, lying, temper, impurity. These are our "demons." These are the ways the kingdom of evil shows its power over us. But Jesus' power is greater. Come face to face with Jesus as this man did, and the evil power will be gone.

Expression Work. 1. Find out other cases of "demoniacs" in the Gospels. 2. Draw a picture of the Lake and the hills at Gerasa.

XIII. JAIRUS'S DAUGHTER**THE LORD OF DEATH****ST. MARK 5^{21ff.}****A. For the Teacher**

1. There are two classes of miracles which Jesus performed, those on man and those on nature. The raising from the dead is the highest of the former class. There are three in the Gospels, the son of the widow of Nain, Lazarus, and this one. Jesus brought back from the dead an only son, an only brother and an only daughter.

2. Jairus was a "ruler of the synagogue." There were always at least two officials in a synagogue, the Ruler and the "Minister." The latter was an attendant, like a verger or Scottish beadle. The former was the presiding officer. He did not conduct the service himself, but he selected those who did. He was responsible for the maintenance and order of the synagogue. And so he was an important man among the Jews. Jairus was a "ruler" in the Capernaum Synagogue, and had seen and heard much of Jesus. He was probably part of the deputation who went to ask Jesus to heal the centurion's servant (Lesson VIII).

3. It was a custom of the Jews to hire and pay mourners at a death, who would lament aloud for the deceased (2 Chron. 35²⁵; Jer. 9¹⁷⁻²⁰; Amos 5¹⁶). It is probable the custom was displeasing to Jesus (Mark 5^{39, 40}).

4. Many writers have denied that there was any miracle here. Did not Jesus Himself say that the girl

was only asleep? Perhaps. But Jesus referred to death as "sleep" (John 11^{11, 14}; compare verse 11 with verse 14). If the child was "dead" in the ordinary sense, then the whole object of this lesson is to get children to think of death as beautifully and as simply as Jesus did. The fact is familiar to them, and it is often made terrible. But it is simply falling asleep in the arms of the Father, said Jesus.

B. Notes

Verses 21, 22. Mark and Luke agree in the time of this incident. Matthew (9¹⁰⁻¹⁸) differs. The matter is not important, because the whole chronology is so uncertain in details.

Verse 36. Note again Jesus' demand for faith, and insistence on its importance.

Verses 37, 40. Why were all put outside except the Big Three and the parents? Probably because Jesus needed the faith of the latter to help Him. In the case of the hired mourners also because He disliked their business.

Verse 38. The paid mourners, see under *A*.

Verse 41. *Talitha Cumi.* These words are in Aramaic, which was the later form of Hebrew and was the native language of Palestine, and of Jesus. He habitually spoke in Aramaic. And His actual words as reported by Mark are often in Aramaic, e.g. Ephphatha, Boanerges, Abba. When Jesus was dying His cry from the Cross was in Aramaic: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani." The words He spoke to the child were "Little girl, get up."

C. The Lesson

1. Jesus did many wonderful things for people (lepers, cripples, blind, deaf and dumb—get examples). But

this is by far the most wonderful thing of all—raising the dead !

2. Who Jairus was (chief man in the church at Capernaum, had often seen and heard Jesus and knew what He had done, probably one of the deputation in Lesson VIII).

3. Imagine *him*, a strict Jew, a high one, coming to ask Jesus for help ! But his need drove him to Jesus. His *only* daughter (Luke 8⁴²) dying. Think of his terrible anxiety and fear. How much he loved her. Nobody else could do anything, therefore he must go for Jesus.

4. Jesus was found on the shore of the Lake, willing as always.

5. But Jairus is in haste, in great haste, and a delay occurs. Refer briefly to the incident of the woman in the crowd, just to emphasize the impatience of Jairus. Every moment precious, and yet Jesus waits to meet another need. The message from the ruler's house. The child dead ! Yet Jesus is calm and reassuring, "Only believe ! "

6. At the house. The scene. The paid mourners. Jesus did not like this. He must have with Him only those who have faith. All others are turned out.

7. Then comes the beautiful act of Jesus, "Little girl, get up !" "Give her something to eat." The joy in the home.

8. What is the meaning of this story ? It is all about death, and what we are to think about death. Death is not something terrible. It is only falling asleep. Picture of a child going to sleep in his mother's arms. So we in God's arms. Nothing terrible beyond. Death is going from one room to another (and better) in God's

House. We are told about Nelson that "his habit was to refer to death with eager frankness and as though he were in love with it." Charles Kingsley said that he looked forward to death "with intense, reverent curiosity." Charles Sorley, who fell in the Great War, described the attitude of the soldier, who was always in danger of death, thus :

"With parted lips and outstretched hands
And listening ears Thy servant stands.
Call Thou early, call Thou late,
To Thy great service dedicate."

XIV. THE DINNER AT SIMON'S MUCH FORGIVENESS, MUCH LOVE

ST. LUKE 7³⁶⁻⁵⁰

A. For the Teacher

1. "This section, peculiar to Luke, one of the golden evangelic incidents we owe to him, is introduced here with much tact, as it serves to illustrate how Jesus came to be called the friend of Publicans and sinners, and to be calumniated as such, and at the same time to show the true nature of the relations He sustained to these classes" (Bruce). Along with Luke 5³¹ and 15, this passage gives a complete *apologia* for Jesus' conduct towards "publicans and sinners."

2. All kinds of Eastern customs are implied in this narrative, and these must be carefully explained to children. (a) When a guest arrived at a house he received the kiss of welcome. A servant then came with jug and basin, holding the latter under feet and hands,

and pouring water over both from the former. This was a necessity in a hot climate where people wore sandals and their feet were dusty and heated. Then "oil" was poured over the head as a sign of friendship (see Psalm 23⁵). The omission of these courtesies was a grave impoliteness on Simon's part. (b) How did the notorious sinner get entrance to the house of Simon during an entertainment? It is the custom of the East to keep open house. Anyone can come in, and talk with a friend, even at a meal. Trench quotes a narrative from the English Consul at Damietta who was invited to dinner by a pasha, and all the time of dinner (he says) people came in and did business with the guests and went out again. (c) At a meal people reclined on their left sides on couches placed round the table; their feet were pointed outwards. Hence the action of the woman. It was the custom of the disciples of a rabbi to embrace his feet as a sign of devotion (see Matt. 28⁹).

3. There are so many things suggested in this story that the teacher must make his objective clear. The real lesson is the love which is awakened in a sinner's heart by the grace of Jesus, His mercy and His great kindness. It is the conduct of the woman that is the central point, and the reason for it. She had received a great benefit from Jesus, and showed her sense of her debt by her great gift.

B. Notes

Verse 36. Jesus dined both with publicans and pharisees, the two extremes.

sat down: better reclined.

Verse 37. *in the city*: Capernaum? Likely.

in the house of a pharisee: "a formidable place for one like her, but what will love not dare?" (Bruce).

an alabaster box: a flask made of alabaster, and so called here “*an alabaster*” (it is one word), just as we call a tumbler made of glass a “*glass*.” From a place called Alabastron in Egypt, the marble of which was thought to be excellent for preserving unguents (Stock).

Verses 44–46. The words have a poetic rhythm “as is apt to be the case when men speak under deep emotion” (Bruce).

Verse 47. The meaning is not that the woman was forgiven because she loved. That would make the parable of the debtors in verses ^{41–43} meaningless. It would make the whole of the teaching of Jesus and of the New Testament meaningless. If we say, “I tell you the boy is getting better, for he is laughing,” we do not mean that his laughing is the cause of his getting better. And Jesus says here, “I tell you she is forgiven because her love is great.” Her great love was a proof that she had been forgiven.

C. *The Lesson*

Introduction. One fine thing about Jesus was that He championed the weak. The stories we read about brave knights are generally about their fighting for distressed damsels or people who could not fight for themselves. That was what Jesus was constantly doing (e.g. Mark 12^{41–44}; John 12^{7, 8}; John 8^{3–11}). Here is another instance in this story. The story has three stages.

1. *What Simon did.* Invitation to Jesus. But omission of usual courtesies. What these were and why offered. Not offered to Jesus; gross rudeness. The arrival of the woman. How she came to find entrance into the house (see A). Her actions and what

they meant. What she had already got from Jesus, from His message and from His divine kindness. Simon's hardness. How he judged her. His pride. How he condemned her and shut her out. Want of courtesy and want of love. Point out that this lack of love was to Jesus the greatest of sins (Matt. 25³¹⁻⁴⁶). The great commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . and thy neighbour as thyself." What about us ? Our attitude to sinners ? Our attitude to Jesus ?

2. *What Jesus did.* This woman had been a bad woman and had lost all hope. Jesus did for her the greatest thing in the world. He gave her the assurance of forgiveness, showed her that she could even yet live a good and happy life, lifted a heavy load of despair from her. Show how constantly Jesus found out those who were "down and out," how He stood up for them and how He led them back to better things. And explain carefully what forgiveness is. It is a Clean Sheet, a Second Chance. It is Hope and Courage. It means that God gives us back our life cleansed and new, and trusts us to do better. It is God's trust in His children. No wonder the woman loved Jesus. She took Him at His word, believed Him, and the burden of her misery fell off. Tell the story of Christian in the *Pilgrim's Progress* losing his burden.

3. *What the Woman did.* Her extraordinary actions. What they meant. They show us what real love is and specially what love to Jesus ought to be. Here is a beautiful thing, that love is always extravagant. Real love never stint its gifts. Tell the story of David's men who risked their lives to get him a drink of water from the well at Bethlehem (1 Chron. 11¹⁷⁻¹⁹). Sir G. A. Smith was once travelling in a train in France in

which was a young priest who was going home to say good-bye to his mother for the last time. "Why the last time?" asked Sir George. "Because I am going to a mission field where the average life is three years." "And why are you going?" he was asked. Putting his hand on his breast, he said solemnly, "The life I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for me."

XV. JESUS AS A TEACHER

1. The Conception of Jesus as a Saviour is, I think, truest to His mission and purpose. He came to save men. But He saves men partly by means of *truth*. And a large part of His time was spent in teaching. Two things, however, have to be remembered. One is, that He taught as much by His life and death as by His words. His Cross, for example, is a clearer exhibition of the soul of His message than any of His discourses. We see in Jesus, as well as hear from Him, what He came to teach. The other thing is, that some of His most precious instruction was given in private to His disciples. Much of His time was spent, especially in the later period of His life, in training the disciples so that they might be able to carry on when He was gone. Narratives like those of the Baptism and Temptation, which embody the very meaning of His ministry, were probably part of this private instruction.

2. *Features of the Teaching.* Jesus' method had four characteristic features: (1) It was pictorial. He used figurative *language* (e.g. the wine and wine-skins, the sick and the physician, the patch on the garment), figurative *deeds* (e.g. the feet-washing, the Lord's

Supper, the triumphal entry into Jerusalem), and figurative *stories* (like the Parables). These were not merely illustrations, but were actually suggested by objects before Jesus. The illustration before Him suggested the truth, as in the case of the children playing in the market-place. (2) It was paradoxical. That is to say, He took a truth and stated it in an extreme form so as to make it vivid. This extreme form signified what the truth *might* involve in certain circumstances. The truth itself has to be disengaged from this extreme instance and applied to the special situation in which we find ourselves. Examples are many. "Except a man hate his father and mother he cannot be my disciple." "If anyone strikes you on the one cheek turn to him the other also." "Don't refuse anyone who wishes to borrow from you." The demand seems impossible until we realize that Jesus is stating a truth in a paradoxical form. (3) It was *occasional*. That is to say, it was not, for the most part, formal teaching on a subject, like a lecture or a sermon. It was suggested by some incident or question, as Jesus was walking along or sitting in a house or standing watching people or coming suddenly on an object like a fig-tree. His teaching was not systematic. When He saw His disciples disputing about precedence He took a child and read them a lesson on simplicity and humility. That was how, for the most part, all His teaching was given. (4) But, above all, it was *suggestive*. This is its chief characteristic. Jesus never (except in one case) legislated. He did not lay down rules or tell people how they were to act in detail. He stated broad principles and truths, and then said to His disciples, "Go and carry these out;" but He did not tell them *how* to carry them out. He never does our thinking

for us. This is an astonishing feature of His teaching. Take some examples. He said nothing about slavery or about woman or about social problems. But He stated clearly the truths which, if we put them into practice, afford clear guidance about all these subjects. He asserted the infinite value of the individual soul, and, though He said nothing about slavery, this truth has freed the slaves. It has also elevated womanhood. Again He demanded love for all, a love that is ready to serve all, a love that regards all as brothers. And this, if we follow it, will abolish war and solve the social problem. Jesus' way seems precarious. It trusts human nature so absolutely. And yet it has had a wonderful success. Think what already the Spirit of Jesus has done for the world !

3. The Substance of His Teaching. If Jesus' teaching was not systematic, it is a mistake to try to form a system out of it. But there are certain things He teaches over and over again. And some of these may be mentioned. Most of His teaching is about *God*, God's love, God's Fatherly care of us, God's seeking and saving grace that never lets us go. This truth, wonderful as is Jesus' exposition of it, can never be truly exhibited without the picture of Jesus Himself on the Cross. Along with this truth about God must be mentioned Jesus' emphasis on *Faith*. Absolute trust in the Father is the characteristic of Jesus' true disciples, a trust that banishes anxiety about the future. Jesus demanded the same faith in Himself. And, speaking generally, Jesus said that if a man had faith enough, he could do and get anything. Another matter often emphasized by Jesus was *Prayer*. Here again He was very definite, both in parables, like the Friend at Midnight, and in sayings like "Ask and it shall be given

you." And He encourages us to pray with the emphatic assurance that if we pray aright we shall certainly receive. Another dominating word in our Lord's teaching is *Love*, love to all, love to enemies, love to the needy, love that is unselfish and considerate, love that will serve. This may be said to be the key to all His teaching about conduct. And when He pictures the final judgment, it is the loveless who will go into outer darkness. Indeed, all other subjects, like the use of wealth, seem to go back to this demand of love for their true understanding. Finally Jesus said much about the *Future Life*, not by way of explaining what it is to be like, but in the way of encouragement and warning. There is a future, and there is punishment as well as blessedness, and "the Son of Man will give to every man according to his works." These are the main subjects of which Jesus speaks, and they are all to be found in the lessons dealt with in this book.

XVI. HOW TO KEEP THE LORD'S DAY

ST. MARK 2²³⁻²⁸, 3¹⁻⁶

A. *For the Teacher*

1. The context (Mark 2¹⁸⁻²²) shows that this teaching on the Sabbath is an example of what Jesus said about new wine and new wine-skins. If wine is put into a skin it expands the skin to its utmost; but if new wine is then put into the old stretched skin the expansion of the wine bursts the old skin. "New wine, new skins," is the principle of Jesus. He brought a new spirit and this needed new forms. It *burst* the old forms. His

joyous circle could not fast. And His new life could not be confined within old Sabbath regulations.

2. It must be clearly recognized that the teaching and practice of Jesus was not directed against the Old Testament Sabbath. In point of fact that was a happy and helpful ordinance. But when, after the Restoration from Exile, the scribes became the interpreters of the Law, they piled up all kinds of additions to it which in time were regarded with nearly the same reverence as the Law itself. These were the "traditions of the elders," which Jesus swept away. For example, a knot that could be untied with one hand might be unloosed on the Sabbath, but not one that needed two hands. A man might not carry a pail of water to his thirsty horse. A tailor might not carry a needle. Pulling ears of corn was reaping, and rubbing them in the hands was threshing, and these might not be done on the Sabbath. And so on. It was all this rubbish Jesus cleared away.

3. The teaching on the Sabbath is a great example of Jesus' method of teaching. He never laid down rules. He taught principles and sent men away to apply these *themselves*. He would not say this or that was wrong on the Sabbath. All He said was, "the Sabbath was made for man," for his welfare. That was His principle, and He allowed His disciples to decide what this meant in particular cases. The Christian life is a self-legislating life.

4. We see here the beginning of that enmity against Jesus which in the end brought Him to His death (Mark 3⁶). The scribes hated Him because He made light of their endless rules. These were their religion, and Jesus ignored or derided them. And from this

time we find them watching Him with more and more hostility, which soon became an active, persecuting resolve on His death.

B. Notes

Chapter ii. 23. This was allowed by the Law (Deut. 23²⁵). The offence lay in its being done on the Sabbath day.

Verse 25. See 1 Samuel 21^{1ff.} David was the national idol. What *he* did could not be wrong !

Verse 26. What the " shewbread " was, see Leviticus 24⁵⁻⁸; Leviticus 24⁹ restricts its use to the priests. There is a difficulty about Abiathar. In 1 Samuel 21 Abimelech is given as the priest. Abiathar was his son. Was this a slip of the tongue ? or an error of a copyist ? or did both men have the name Abiathar ? All these explanations have been given.

Verse 27. " For this saying alone Mark's Gospel was worth preserving " (Bruce).

Chapter iii. 1. An old tradition says the man was a stone-mason.

Verse 2. A fine Sabbath occupation for men who were standing up for righteousness.

Verse 4. Not to do good to anyone when it is possible is to do evil.

C. The Lesson

Introduction. What is the Lord's Day called ? What did Jesus call it ? Sabbath. How was it kept ? Joyfully in olden times—a blessed day of rest and happiness. But later the scribes (teachers of the people when there were no more prophets) added all kinds of rules which made the Sabbath a burden. Give examples.

Jesus kept the Sabbath according to its original meaning. But He swept away all these new-fangled rules. Hence the anger of the scribes. The incident is an example of this.

1. One day the disciples were going through a field. Describe the event. Was this wrong? No, the Law allowed it (Deut. 23²⁵). Why then were they angry? Because it was done on the Sabbath. Reaping and threshing on the Sabbath!

2. Jesus' answer. (1) What David did (1 Sam. 21^{ff.}). David broke a rule because of his *necessity*. A *rule*, mark. Jesus never says that any necessity can justify us in doing wrong. In His own temptation He refused to use His power in a way that was not according to God's will, even to save His life. If a City Council made a rule that no one was to go into a certain field and a man saw an animal or a child being tortured he would be justified in breaking into the field to save life. (2) Another incident. The stone-mason. Jesus angry at the scribes' lack of love. His argument. (3) But Jesus goes further and tells us how we are to keep the sacred day. It was given "for man." For man's *good*. It was a gift, a blessing, a help. First, for man's *body*. And therefore for *rest*. Therefore as little work as possible that toilers may find new strength for labour. Then, secondly, for *service*. A day to help anyone who needs you. And, finally, for *worship*, for man's highest welfare. Jesus showed this by His example in always attending church.

3. Now something really great comes out of this. The religion Jesus teaches is a religion of *freedom*. There are no rules. Jesus gives us a great duty, to love God and to love our neighbour, and He says if we

live according to that we shall do right in everything. Only love God and your neighbour and you will keep the sacred day as God wishes you.

4. What does this mean ? Not that we are to do as we like on the Lord's Day, but that we shall keep it for our highest good, and for the highest good of others. This condemns the narrow, burdensome Sabbath. But also the careless, selfish use of the Sabbath. It is not to be a day only of pleasure, but it is not to be a hard, joyless day either. It will be a joyous day, but also it will be a *separate* day. God has given us one day in the week in which to learn how to live all the other days.

Expression Work. 1. Find out other miracles Jesus did on the Sabbath. A surprising number. 2. How would you apply Jesus' teaching to games, and work, and amusement on the Lord's Day ? For example, golf, reading, school lessons ?

XVII. THE SOWER

HOW TO LISTEN

ST. MARK 4¹⁻²⁰

A. *For the Teacher*

1. This is the first great example of the pictorial method Jesus employed in teaching. He used figurative language (the wine-skins, the undressed cloth), figurative deeds (the feet-washing, the Lord's Supper), and significant stories (the parables). He used this method, the evangelists tell us (Mark 4¹⁰⁻¹²), in order that His truth might reach those who were truly receptive. Hearers who were prepared to think and who were

willing to be taught perceived the hidden meaning while the careless did not. *We* have something to do in order to receive the truth of God. It depends on how we hear. And as this is according to a divine law, the purpose in it may be attributed to God (Mark 4^{11, 12}). Pasteur once said that he made his great discoveries because he had cultivated the habit of observation. "Chance favours the mind that is prepared." So that a great deal depends on the *soil*.

2. There are two features in this parable that are exceptional. One is that Jesus explains its meaning in detail. Another is that the details are significant. Generally speaking, it is a sound principle to lay down that a parable has only *one* truth embodied in it, and that the details are merely parts of the scenery or accessories. It is a mistake to ask, "What is the meaning of this or that detail?" They have generally no meaning at all except to add to the vividness and reality of the story. Here, however, all the details are full of meaning.

3. The historical significance of this parable in the life of Jesus is that Jesus explains the comparative failure of His preaching. His truth only went home to a very small section of the crowds who listened. And we find in this story the reason. It lay in their own attitude and character.

B. Notes

Verse 4. *wayside*: not a highway but a path through the field made by much traffic and therefore *hard*.

Verse 5. *stony ground*: rather "rocky" ground, a thin layer of soil over a stratum of rock.

Verse 7. *thorns*: soil with thorn seeds or roots. The "thorns" in Palestine were so powerful when they

grew up that a horseman could hardly force his way through them.

Verse 11. *mysteries.* In the New Testament this word means truth once unknown but now revealed and made plain to all. It is not a secret or unintelligible doctrine.

Verses 11, 12. In the passage quoted from Isaiah, as well as in our Lord's words, the meaning is that those who will not bring a receptive heart see nothing. That is the *result*, and it is put here as if it were the *purpose*, because it is according to God's Law.

C. *The Lesson*

Introduction. What is a Parable? "An earthly story with a heavenly meaning." Why did Jesus teach so much by parables? To make us think. He wants us to do something in order to find out His great truth for ourselves. Well, here is one of His greatest stories. Let us first get the "earthly story," and then the "heavenly meaning."

1. The Earthly Story. Describe the scene, the hill-side covered with people, tier on tier, Jesus in the boat. Jesus tells a story. Perhaps the scene was going on before their eyes. In any case it was familiar. The fields in Palestine are not like ours, enclosed with fences. They are marked only by a heap of stones. The sower swinging along with his basket slung at His side. What happened to the seed. Put this on the blackboard as you go on.

	<i>Soil</i>	<i>Result</i>
<i>wayside</i>	hard	did not <i>get in</i>
<i>rocky</i>	shallow	did not <i>get down</i>
<i>thorny</i>	dirty	did not <i>get up</i>
<i>good</i>	soft, deep, clean	got in, down and up

Notice that in the first case the seed did not get a chance at all. In the second it could not get rooted. In the third it got rooted but was choked by the powerful "thorns." In the last case, it got a chance, it got rooted and it got a free way up in a fine crop unhampered by weeds.

2. *The Heavenly Meaning.* What is the seed? Truth. What is the soil? Our minds. And the Sower? Well, it may be (1) Jesus. He taught truth, and the minds that listened were of all three kinds. Some did not let it in at all. These were the Pharisees. Others were delighted at first and enthusiastic, but fell away afterwards. Peter was like that. But above all, Judas. Others would have followed Jesus but for something which they liked better, for example, the Rich Young Ruler. Others, like the disciples, like John and Paul, gave Jesus their whole love and devotion, and never turned their back on Him.

(2) But the story is as true of us to-day. Take a class in school. When the teacher is giving truth (about *anything*) there are all these boys and girls in the class. (a) There is the wayside listener. The teacher's truth does not get *in*. It gets no further than the ear. "In at one ear and out at the other." Why? The boy's mind is full of yesterday's football or something else, careless, doesn't want to learn, is not interested. The teacher has not a chance. (b) The rocky-ground hearer. The shallow soil. Changeable, pliable, enthusiastic at first, but soon tires. No endurance. At games and lessons and everything else. Tell the story of the Frenchman who said to Lord Palmerston that French soldiers were the bravest in the world. To which Lord Palmerston replied that he did not think British soldiers were any braver, but they were brave

a quarter of an hour longer. It is "sticking it out" that counts at games, lessons and in life. (c) Then there is the boy who does not give his whole mind to his lesson or to what he is at. Only half his mind is on anything at a time. What is wrong is that he does not place his present duty *first*. The men who have done anything great are the men who have put it *first* and kept it there, explorers, statesmen, scholars, scientists. This is the secret of achievement. (d) Finally the boy who attends, and who perseveres and who gives his mind to the matter in hand. This is the good scholar, however little his ability may be.

3. Jesus' lesson is as true of the truth about God which is given to us in the Bible. There are people who do not pay any heed to it. There are people who welcome it at first but they soon tire of it. There are people who only give half their hearts to it (like Cardinal Wolsey, "If I had served my God, etc."). And there are people, like the saints, like Knox, like Wesley and Francis and Bernard, who "seek first the Kingdom of God."

4. And so the great lesson of Jesus is about the way we hear. Right hearing is not easy. It demands pains, attention, perseverance. We should listen when God speaks, as a soldier listens to his officer's command, as a patient listens to his doctor's instructions. We should give all our mind to it. In class, in church or reading a book.

Expression Work. 1. What characters in the Bible represent the different soils? 2. Draw a picture of the field with the sower and the different kinds of ground.

XVIII. THE GOOD SAMARITAN

NEIGHBOUR IS WHO NEIGHBOUR DOES

ST. LUKE 10²⁵⁻³⁷

A. For the Teacher

1. It is rather difficult to put the Lawyer's question in terms that are intelligible to children. But perhaps "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" is not untruly rendered by "What must I do to be a really good man?" Eternal life is the best kind of life. The idea that "What must I do to get to heaven?" is equivalent is wrong. "Eternal" refers to the quality of the life.

2. There are several matters of historical, geographical and local interest to be explained here, and it seems best to explain these before telling the story, as constant explanations interrupt the narrative, and spoil it. For the Jewish "lawyers" and Scribes and for the Priests and Levites, see the Introduction. The Levites were a kind of assistant priests. The Samaritans were a half-caste race, descended from the immigrants sent into the country by Assyria when she conquered the northern kingdom in 723 B.C. The Jewish males were deported to Assyria, and the immigrant heathen who took their places intermarried with the Jewish women. From them came the race, half-pagan and half-Jew, which was called Samaritan. The Jews, who were proud of their purity of race, despised these half-breeds and the Samaritans, conscious of this contempt, hated the Jews. Hence the phrase in the Gospel, "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." It was

characteristic of Jesus' courage, as well as expressive of His great heart, that He chose a Samaritan as the hero of this story.

3. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho is a notorious one. It was called "The Ascent of Blood" because of the tragedies that had occurred on it. There were caves at the side of the road which hid robbers who sprang out on the traveller. Many deeds of blood had been done on it, and it is not a safe road to-day. See *Historical Geography*, by Sir G. A. Smith, pp. 264, 265.

B. Notes

Verse 26. The point of Jesus' question was that the scribe was an expert in the Law and ought to have been able to answer his own question. The Law here is the Pentateuch, or first five books of the Old Testament.

Verse 30. *thieves*: rather robbers, banditti.

Verse 31. *by chance*: rather by coincidence, which is the exact meaning. And it *was* a coincidence the three men were going down at one time!

Priest. Jericho was a place of residence of many priests, so this priest and Levite were going home after doing their duty in the Temple at Jerusalem.

Verse 34. *oil and wine*: wine to cleanse the wound, oil to soothe and heal it.

inn: not a bare khan, which was simply four walls of enclosure, but a house with a landlord.

Verse 35. *twopence*: about 2s. roughly, and with much more purchasing power than our 2s.

when I return: evidently a regular customer.

Verse 36. Jesus turns round the lawyer's question, not "who is my neighbour?" but "what it is to *be* a neighbour?"

C. The Lesson

Introduction. One day a lawyer, a teacher, asked Jesus a very important question : “What must I do to be a really good man ?” Jesus answered, “Well, you know the Law, what does it say ?” The lawyer’s good reply, “Love God and your neighbour.” That satisfied Jesus. But the lawyers were niggling people who discussed the meaning of this and that in the Law, and he asked Jesus, “Yes, but what does neighbour mean ?” In reply Jesus told this story.

1. There was a famous road in Palestine that ran down steeply from Jerusalem on the heights to Jericho in the Jordan Valley (map). In Jerusalem was the great temple or church in which the Priests and the Levites (who were a kind of assistant priests) ministered and led the worship. Jericho was a place where many of the Priests lived. This road was a dangerous one, very gloomy and difficult, with caves at some parts in which robbers hid until they could spring out on people who were going up and down.

2. The attack on the traveller, a Jew who had done his business and likely had lots of money with him. The man wounded and left half-dead on the road.

3. As he lay he saw a Priest coming down going home to Jericho after doing his duty at the Temple. Hope sprang in the man’s heart. Why ? The Priest was a religious man and therefore would not fail to help. But he passed by ! Why ? in a hurry or afraid of the robbers, or not wishing to be mixed up in trouble.

4. Despair in the man’s heart. But see ! another Priest, a Levite. Surely *two* could not pass and leave him ? But the Levite did also after going over and

looking at him. Probably he said to himself if the Priest did not help why should he ?

5. Then the Samaritan. The man's heart sank when he saw who it was. Why ? The Samaritans hated the Jews. Why ? therefore no help from this source ! But he was wrong. What the Samaritan did. Rescue and care.

6. That was the story, and Jesus asked the lawyer : " Who then was a neighbour to the wounded man ? " The answer : he that helped him.

7. Give any examples of this from history or biography. Sir Philip Sidney and the wounded soldier ; Nurse Cavell ; Stevenson and the Samoan chiefs ; Britain and Belgium in the Great War. Or tell Tolstoi's story, " Where love is God is," or Abou Ben Adhem.

Here is a beautiful example :

" Twelve porters, Tibetans and others, under Hazard, descending from Camp IV, were caught in a snow-storm. Four men turned back and were left behind.

" What should be done ? Norton does not seem to have doubted for a moment. . . . All along, his one fixed determination had been that on no account must there be any casualties among the porters this year. There was only one thing to do and that was to rescue them. They must be got down alive at all costs. Further, he himself must be of the rescue party—he and two others, and the two very best climbers, Mallory and Somervell. Only the best would do for this work. And this decision he came to—and the other two equally with himself contributed to it—although they were all three ill from their exhausting experiences at this 21,000-feet camp, and from their arduous work in pioneering the way up the North Col.

" At the risk of his own life, at the risk of Mallory's and Somervell's lives, these men must be rescued. They were of a different race and of a different religion and of only a lowly position in life. But they were fellow-men. More, they were

fellow-men in a common adventure. They were ever ready to risk their lives for their leaders. Their leaders must now risk their lives for them.

"Fellowship told. And this sense of fellowship must have been deeply ingrained in the very texture of Norton, Somervell and Mallory." Sir Francis Younghusband, *The Epic of Mount Everest*, pp. 237, 238.

8. Jesus got the lawyer to apply the story to himself. Get the children to do so. What is being a neighbour in your own life, where you are? Get them to see that the race line, the religion line, the social line are all to be ignored if anyone needs us. Helping the poor, the aged, the weak, the heathen, the drunkard. The children will give definite ways.

Expression Work. Two ways of good expression work: 1. Dramatize the story. Let the children act it. 2. Get the class to do something for somebody, a sick member of the class or anyone in need.

XIX. THE PRODIGAL SON

WHAT GOD IS

ST. LUKE 15¹¹⁻³²

A. *For the Teacher*

1. This is the greatest story in the world. The teacher's real difficulty is his familiarity with it. He thinks he knows it, and he can only teach it well if he realizes that this is a delusion, and that he must study it and live it and get inside its skin. He will only gradually find out that every phrase in the story has its own significance. Every word adds a touch to the picture, and the telling of the story means the use of all

these touches. But avoid spiritualizing any of them. The robe, the ring, the shoes, for example, mean nothing "spiritual" at all. They are parts of the setting. They are what the father would give to his son to show him that he *was* his son again. Slaves did not wear these things, but sons did.

2. Jesus told the three stories in St. Luke 15 as an apologia for His interest in the outcast classes. The Pharisees said, "This man receiveth sinners." Jesus justified and explained His attitude to publicans and sinners in these parables. *This* was how God thought about these people and what God wanted to do for them. They were "lost" and must be found and brought back.

3. Do not imply a "conviction of sin" on the part of the children. That is a mature experience. It is sufficient to make clear that wrong-doing is *always* punished, and that we must be sorry for it and ready to give it up if we are to be forgiven. The simpler we are, the truer we shall be to a child's life.

4. It is very difficult to get the elder brother into this lesson without confusing its message. It would be better to make a separate lesson of him. I have, however, brought in this episode in the fifth section of the lesson, and the teacher could elaborate at that point if he wished.

B. Notes

Verse 16. *husks*: carob or locust bean pods. These are sold as food for animals and are regarded as very poor fare for human beings (Hastings).

Verse 17. *came to himself*: "came to his senses" (Moffatt).

Verse 19. *hired servants.* There were three classes of servants in the East ; slaves, hired servants, and unhired servants. The second were like our own domestic servants to-day, the third were often poor relations who lived in the house. The humility of the prodigal son is seen in his asking for only the second grade.

C. *The Lesson*

Introduction. Why the Pharisees found fault with Jesus, what *they* thought of the outcasts with whom Jesus so often made friends. These outcasts were despised by the respectable classes who would not have anything to do with them. Jesus was different. Why ? He explains in these stories of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Lost Son. We take the last. There are four scenes in the drama.

1. *Leaving Home.* In the East the sons might claim to have the property divided among them. Perhaps so in Palestine. In any case, this son did so. Why ? Not because his home was bad. It was comfortable, father kind, plenty of work, everything to make a good home, comfort and love. Why then ? Because he had a prodigal's nature, restless, wayward, weak, self-indulgent, selfish ; also because he wanted his own way. He was tired of the restrictions of home, he had to be in early, he had to do things he did not like ; he wanted freedom. Home was *dull*. And also because he thought that real happiness was to be found in sin. This stage may be summed up as *waywardness*.

2. *The Far Country.* The "good times" he had at first—boon companions—pleasures—vice—drink and gambling in the great city to which he had drifted (Rome ?). Bad company and false idea of "freedom."

Then the result. Money gone, companions melt away, want, hunger, rags, degradation ; character gone, none will employ him. The idea of happiness in sin is a lie. Tell the story of Da Vinci's model. He had a beautiful model for the face of Jesus in his "Last Supper." When, a good long time after, he sought a model for Judas he found one in a depraved man who turned out to be the same man who had sat for Jesus ! sunk low through vice. This stage may be summed up as *Retribution*.

3. *Coming Back.* The *awakening* (how ? by the thought of home once despised and by the thought of his father's love) ; then the *conviction* of his own folly (came to himself, his *real self* : the real self is not the sinful self but the self that sees the truth about things, came to his senses) ; then the *confession* of his folly ; and finally the *decision* to return. All this can be summed up as *Repentance*. A fine parallel to the prodigal's return is found in the story of Gough, the temperance orator, who was redeemed, when he was down at the lowest level and at the point of suicide, by a kindly word. Another parallel is Peter after his denial of Jesus.

4. *The Welcome Home.* The father waiting and watching. What he did. The robe, the ring, all part of the Welcome, to show the penitent boy that he was certainly forgiven and restored to his father's confidence. This is all to be summed up as *Forgiveness*. What is forgiveness ? A new page—a new chance—life given back again.

5. And all this is just a picture of *what God is, and what He wants to do for us*. The Pharisees did not think so. And Jesus draws a sketch of them in the

elder son who was angry at his foolish brother being welcomed back. The Pharisees were angry at Jesus welcoming back the poor sinners who came to Him. But Jesus came to the world just to do this, just to bring back the "lost," and to show that this is what is in God's heart. God is the Father of all. All, even the wicked, are His children. And even though they have done evil, if they are sorry and turn back to Him, they are forgiven and restored. Forgiveness is a *clean sheet*, a second chance. God hands us our life back again and trusts us to live it worthily. He is our Father and loves us all and never ceases to try to bring us back to Himself. Even at our very worst He never leaves us. When Captain Williams was torpedoed in the Mediterranean, and was in the water he tells us that "there the thought came very clearly to me that in the depths of the sea *there* was God with me. If He could ever help me He would help me there, just as much as if I were safe upon dry land, and with that thought came the ability to reason clearly and to act quickly and sanely" (*Prisoners of the Red Desert*).

Expression Work. 1. This story lends itself admirably to dramatic treatment. Let the children act it; 2, or let them draw it.

XX. THE DEATH OF THE BAPTIST

SIN AND ITS FRUIT

ST. MARK 6¹⁴⁻²⁹

A. For the Teacher

1. It is important to deal with a story that illustrates the place which the Herods had in the life of the New Testament period. Herod "the Great" (the Herod

of the infancy story) was the son of an Idumean, and was the trusted servant of Rome and the ruler of all Palestine. When he died his kingdom was divided among his sons. Archelaus was ruler of Judæa (he is supposed to be referred to in St. Luke 19^{12ff}), but his kingdom was soon taken from him and Judæa was ruled directly by a Roman Governor (Pilate, Felix and Festus are the three mentioned in the New Testament). Galilee was given to Herod Antipas (the Herod of this story) with the title "Tetrarch." Perea was included in this dominion. Philip was ruler of Iturea and other parts in the north. In many ways Herod Antipas was a good ruler. He was, however, a bad man. He enticed his brother Philip's wife, Herodias, away, divorced his own wife (the daughter of Aretas, a neighbouring king) and married Herodias. It was because the Baptist denounced this action that he was shut up in the castle of Machærus. Note that it was Herodias who pursued John with vindictive hatred. The whole incident of Mark 6 was staged by her, Mark tells us (on a "convenient" day, convenient i.e. for Herodias and her plans). She hoped that wine and weakness in Herod, and the presence of others, would fulfil her design. It was Herodias who in the end ruined Herod. She persuaded him to go to Rome and seek the title of King. But his presence invited inquiry and this led to his deposition and banishment.

2. The castle of Machærus where (according to Josephus) John was imprisoned, is situated to the east of the Dead Sea. It may have been Herod's headquarters in the war which his treatment of the daughter of Aretas provoked. There are still found dungeons among its ruins which may well have been the scene of

John's imprisonment (see G. A. Smith, pp. 569-70, or Henderson, pp. 155, 156).

3. Dancing is not engaged in as a pleasure in the East. It is "a spectacle to be looked at by guests. No person of rank, or even of respectability, dances. It is performed only by professionals who are chiefly slave girls, the dancing being usually of a licentious kind" (Robbie, *Lessons on the Life of Jesus Christ*, p. 30). It was therefore a degrading thing for a princess to dance for the amusement of guests.

B. Notes

Verse 19. *had a quarrel*: R.V. has "set herself against." (Bruce has "had a grudge.")

Verse 20. *observed*: rather "kept him safe," i.e. from the revenge of Herodias.

did many things: rather (R.V.) "was much perplexed," i.e. was in two minds, swayed one way by John, another by Herodias.

Verse 21. *convenient*: i.e. for Herodias and her plans. The whole scene and incident staged by Herodias.
his lords, etc. : i.e. the civil authorities, the military men and the persons of social importance.

Verse 22. *The daughter . . . herself*: (R.V.) "Herself," because so unusual for such a person to dance.

Verse 25. *charger*: an old English word for a large dish.

Verse 27. *executioner*: rather "a soldier of the guard."

C. The Lesson

Introduction. The appearance of Jesus caused a great deal of talk. Who was He? Various opinions. Herod's, "John risen"! Why this surprising opinion? Herod's conscience. And so the story to explain.

1. *John in Prison.* Why was John in prison ? The story of Herod and his wicked act. John's courageous words. John, like Elijah before Jezebel and Ahab, or Knox before Mary. John arrested and imprisoned at Machærus, a gloomy castle away east of the Dead Sea. Why there ? Probably Herod was there fighting Aretas (¹⁴⁻¹⁸).

2. *John and Herodias* (¹⁹). Herodias enraged by John's words "set herself" to bring about his death. Many plans, but all came to nothing, because Herod "kept him safe."

3. *John and Herod* (²⁰). Herod often went to talk with John. He was deeply impressed, swayed to the right side often, might have been a different man but for the evil influence at his side.

4. *The Feast and the Promise* (²¹⁻²⁶). But the opportunity of Herodias came with Herod's birthday feast. She knew he would be half drunk and would promise anything. The dance. Herod's generous mood. His promise. Herodias seized her chance and Herod was too weak to do what was right.

5. *The Tragedy* (²⁷⁻²⁹).

6. *The Result.* Such sin as Herod's never remains unpunished. And Herod suffered in two ways : (1) in his conscience. The spectre of John appeared everywhere. When Jesus came Herod at once thought, "This must be John." Compare Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*. Shakespeare frequently dwells on the great truth that sin never escapes punishment. So do the great Greek writers. So does the Bible. And it is true. Men who do wrong suffer in their conscience, though to the world they seem to be all right. Happiness is only to be found in right doing. (2) But Herod

also was brought to ruin by Herodias. She was his "evil genius" (see *A*). Sin goes on producing its evil results. This has been made so by God, to teach us to shun evil and seek good always.

Expression Work. 1. Find out all mentions of Herods in the New Testament. 2. Find references to the life of John the Baptist.

XXI. THE SYRO-PHŒNICIAN WOMAN

THE FAITH THAT WINS

ST. MARK 7²⁴⁻³⁰

A. For the Teacher

1. This incident definitely marks a new departure in the ministry of Jesus. The time of popularity and of crowds and miracles is past, and Jesus turns away from public teaching and healing to seek retirement. Why? Two reasons are given: one the hostility of the authorities, the other the need of leisure to instruct the disciples. Too much is made of the former by some writers. Mr. Middleton Murry, for example, represents Jesus as constantly fleeing from danger and living almost in panic. This is wrong. The real reason was that Jesus, seeing the end approaching, saw also the imperative need of training the disciples. If His cause were to go on, if His followers were to be able to stand alone and carry on after His departure, they needed the most careful and thorough teaching. And so, this latter period was devoted to "the training of the Twelve." For this purpose Jesus needed to get away to quiet places, and therefore we find Him outside the

limits of the Holy Land, in Phœnicia, in Decapolis, in Itrurea in the north, and on the east of the Lake. Use a map and show all these places to make clear Jesus' wandering life.

2. Phœnicia is meant by "the borders of Tyre and Sidon." It is a narrow strip of country at the north-west of Palestine, and was closely connected with the history of Israel at certain times (in Solomon's reign and Ahab's). There does not seem to be any doubt that Jesus actually entered Phœnicia and not merely came to the edges of it. (Consult G. A. Smith, Chap. I, and Henderson, Chap. IX). The woman here is called a "Greek" and "Syro-Phoenician," which are differently explained. "Greek" means probably a Greek-speaking Gentile. The other term means that she was a Phœnician of the Syrian race, distinguished from the Phœnicians of Libya in Africa. Incidentally, the incident indicated that Jesus spoke Greek.

3. One difficulty that at once presses on the teacher is to explain the apparent hardness of Jesus. He was silent and made no response to the woman's appeal at first. And later, He not only refused her request, but used the harsh term "dog" as applied to her race. It is foolish to explain away the attitude of Jesus, as though He was acting a part. The reasons for His refusal are clear. One was the desire for entire isolation. He had come to Phœnicia just to escape the kind of demands this woman made. He wanted to be alone with His disciples. The other reason was that His ministry was to be confined to the Jews. He felt that He must limit His labours to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He gave this reason to His disciples (according to Matt. 15²⁴). The time for the expansion

of His mission to the world had not yet come. As to the term “dogs,” that was the common term for races outside Israel, and Jesus quoted it, but He took the sting out of the word by employing the diminutive. Not the fierce pariah dogs but the domestic pets who are really part of the family were indicated in His expression.

B. Notes

Verse 24. *borders.* This word includes the territories.

Verse 26. *Syro-Phœnician:* see above in *A.*

Verse 27. *Let the children, etc.* Matthew tells us Jesus said also, “I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

Verse 28. *yet.* This is quite wrong. The R.V. gives the proper sense. She made the very fact Jesus mentions an argument, “Yes, Lord, *and even* the dogs get the crumbs !”

C. The Lesson

Introduction. Take the map and show the places where Jesus now goes. Explain (in the case of older pupils) *why* He now went outside Jewish territory. Here He is visiting a famous land where the great seamen of old lived and whence we got our alphabet. He wanted quiet but could not get it! Describe the woman and her need.

1. How Jesus behaved. (1) His silence, even when pestered by the woman’s pertinacity. (2) His refusal of her request, for two reasons (see under *A*). (3) His apparent harshness, use of the word “dogs.” But He probably smiled when He used the word, for He says “little dogs,” the pets of the family! But do not make light of Jesus’ refusal. He did not act as He did “to test her faith,” though His conduct did test her

faith. His refusal was definite and not merely "put on." Contrast His action on this occasion with His attitude to another parent who came about a child (Mark 5^{22ff.}).

2. *How the woman behaved.* The points to be emphasized are her earnestness *and her persistence*. Matthew tells us she followed the disciples and Jesus, in spite of His silence, to the very house, "pestering" them with her importunity. What made her persist thus? This is important. She took hold of two things in Jesus' words. One was "little dogs." There was encouragement in the gentle term. And also the word "first"; let the children *first* be filled. If they first, then at least the others afterwards, with the crumbs from the meal. Luther's comment is worth repeating: "Was not that a master-stroke? She snares Christ in 'His own words.'" We must also exercise a little imagination, and see the smile of Jesus, and remember His personality and its irresistible appeal to the needy. Thus faith triumphed over sight. Sight said, "There is a barrier between Jew and Gentile." Faith said, "There is a heart in Jesus Whose compassion will surmount that barrier" (Oldham). "She heard the deep-hidden Yea, which many times lurks under the seeming Nay" (Trench).

3. *A Great Lesson about Faith.* Dwell on Jesus' constant demand for faith, and the tremendous things He says faith can accomplish. We forget this teaching about faith, or we do not believe it. That is why "faith-healing" and Christian science flourish. "All things are possible to him that believeth." That is the truth here. The power of faith, and especially the power in faith's *persistence*. It is rather silly to suggest

that Jesus yielded here because of the woman's wit. It was the faith in the woman's words that conquered Him and brought Him to "make an exception" of her. Compare the three examples of a persistent faith, the Paralytic, Bartimæus and this woman. Apply this specially to prayer. Jesus tells us that we should not weary of praying, and that persistence in prayer wins an answer. There is no reluctance in God, but often an apparent refusal when we are not ready for His gift.

Why therefore should we do ourselves this wrong,
And others,—that we are not always strong,
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy, and strength, and courage are with Thee ?

Expression Work. 1. Draw a map showing the four countries outside Palestine that Jesus visited. 2. Find Jesus' references to faith in the Gospels.

XXII. THE BOY WITH THE LOAVES AND FISHES

HUMBLE SERVICE

ST. JOHN 6¹⁻¹³

A. For the Teacher

1. This is the only miracle which is narrated in all four Gospels. The reason probably is its importance, owing to its results. According to St. John the people were so enthusiastic after this exhibition of Jesus' power that they wanted to set Him forcibly at the head

of a movement against the Romans. And when He refused, and clearly revealed the spiritual nature of His aims, they turned against Him. Thus the incident is a kind of watershed in His career.

2. The main lesson of the incident is that Jesus is Himself the Bread of Life. Apart from that exposition, one might say the lesson is the Providence of God that never fails to meet any emergency in our lives. But I am taking the liberty of telling the story round the boy with the loaves. The lesson I draw may not be the chief one, but on this occasion I may be pardoned for making the boy the hero of the occasion and concentrating the children's attention on him and his service to Jesus.

3. Exhibit or draw a large scale map of the Lake. It is easily drawn on the blackboard, with the principal places on its shores.

B. Notes

Verse 1. *Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee.* Why ? There may have been two reasons, danger from Herod, and the need of rest. The latter is the one given by Mark. The disciples needed a holiday, and so did Jesus.

Verse 2. The people ran round the north end of the Lake from Capernaum, about 6 miles.

Verse 3. *mountain* : hilly country.

Verse 4. *The passover* : therefore the time was spring. Mark speaks of the green grass, and John of much grass (¹⁰). This could only be found in spring.

Verse 7. Pennyworth. A "penny" was a workman's day-wage. Two hundred would be about £7, but worth much more in purchasing power.

Verse 8. Note that Andrew is always helping some one when we hear of him. Sir Bartle Frere's wife said to a friend who was going to meet him at the station, "He's sure to be helping some one." And, sure enough the friend found him helping an old lady along the platform!

Verse 9. Barley bread was the food of the poor. Cf. Gideon's dream (Jud. 7⁹⁻¹⁴).

Verse 10. Mark says they were arranged like garden plots. "Make the men sit down," for two reasons. (1) that there might be no unseemly crowding and (2) that they might realize they were going to get a good meal (Dods).

Verse 11. Jesus had a peculiarly individual way of breaking bread and blessing it (see Luke 24^{30, 31}).

C. *The Lesson*

1. *Introduction.* A boy's curiosity about a famous speaker. Many boys are like that; would travel a long way to hear a great man.

2. That boy was one of these, sent away with his lunch by his mother, a whole day's holiday to hear Jesus! Probably a fisher boy with part of his father's catch. Poor, for barley bread is only eaten by the poor. A bright boy, because interested in Jesus. Saw the crowds hurrying and joined them.

3. But Jesus' holiday spoiled! The great crowd that awaited His boat. Disciples annoyed. Jesus ever patient, and ready, even when tired, to teach and heal.

4. A long day! Jesus working all the time. Teaching the crowds, healing sick, conversing, answering questions. Interesting for the boy, tiring for Jesus.

5. The hungry crowd. No food. No shops near.

"What are we to do?" Disciples helpless. Jesus calm. The dialogue with the disciples.

6. The ever-helpful Andrew finds the boy, who was probably listening and shyly offered his modest lunch to Andrew. Given to Jesus.

7. The crowd seated. Looked like a garden plot with paths between. The orderly meal. All satisfied.

8. And so this boy did a great service to Jesus and to others by the offer of his humble provision. A wonderful fact. Name any other children in the Bible who did this. The little maid in Naaman's home. Paul's nephew who saved the Apostle's life (Acts 23¹²⁻²³). The story of Santa Zita. Zita was a poor servant maid in Lucca, with the love of Christ and of the poor in her heart. She spent all her spare time and money in making garments for poor children, distributed them with her own hands, and did this for forty years. Her deed and name became known, and every year on her birthday the servant maids of Lucca meet and put flowers on her tomb. She was canonized by the Pope.

9. Our slender resources, if blessed and used by Christ, become effective in His service and for the good of others. Possibilities in a child. Trebonius, a German schoolmaster, made a bow to his boys every time he met them as a class, because he did not know what might be lying dormant in them. And one of his boys was Martin Luther.

Small service is true service while it lasts,
The daisy, by the shadow that it casts,
Protects the lingering dewdrop from the sun.

Expression Work. 1. Draw anything in the lesson that struck you! I once asked a class to do this, and one boy drew a house with the mother sending her

son away with his lunch for the day to hear Jesus. Out of her mouth was coming the words "So long!"

2. Find three occasions when Andrew was helping others.
3. Tell the story of this day as the boy would tell it to his mother at night.

XXIII. PETER'S CONFESSION

FAITH IN CHRIST

ST. MATTHEW 16¹³⁻¹⁹

A. For the Teacher

1. This incident is the climax of the Gospel History. We see here the real fruit of the training which Jesus had been giving to His disciples, and the result of their day by day fellowship with Him. It is the first time the Messiahship of Jesus has been acknowledged by any one and accepted by Jesus Himself. Hitherto He had not proclaimed Himself Messiah, because the minds of His followers were full of wrong ideas of what the Messiah was to be, ideas of a powerful, patriotic leader who would lead the people against the Romans. The disciples had first to know Jesus and then He could say to them "This is what the Messiah is to be." The time had come to claim the divine title when they knew Him. And when He does claim it He at once (see next lesson) proceeds to explain what His work is to be and what fate awaits Him. But even yet He refuses to make the claim publicly because the people were not yet prepared.

2. This passage is supposed to be difficult to teach because it might seem to give countenance to the claims

of Rome. There is no such danger in it. When the incident is read naturally and historically it will be obvious that the Roman claim built on it is preposterous. There is no doubt that our Lord's words do give Peter the splendid primacy of the first real believer. In that sense he is the foundation stone of the Christian Church. But there is no primacy of authority. By virtue of his faith he became a steward of God's grace, opening the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers like himself. And whenever in Christ's Church the faith of Peter prevails there the believers will come to right decisions. This is the meaning of "binding" and "loosing," a common Rabbinical phrase. There is no trace of any primacy of authority for Peter in the New Testament. And, even if there were, there is not a shred of evidence that it would be transmitted to his successors.

3. The misuse of this passage has made it suspect, and some scholars hold that Jesus did not say what is reported here. There is no ground whatever for this opinion, and the reasons given are flimsy in the extreme. Bruce has shown (*Expositor's Greek Testament*) that psychologically the words of Jesus fit the situation. Also the word "church" (*ecclesia*) here was a very familiar word to Jesus in the Bible He used (the Greek version of the Old Testament). And finally, do not these words just confirm what Jesus had already done? The disciple circle was *already* the Church. In effect the Church was already a reality, and can Jesus not be allowed to speak of a thing which was (at least in potency and beginnings) already *there*?

4. The best way to teach this lesson (which would naturally be given in detail only to higher classes) is

the Socratic method, by question and answer. The words need careful explanation, and this can be given best in a free conversation.

B. Notes

Verse 13. *coasts of Cæsarea Philippi*: the region of Cæsarea Philippi. For the physical features, see G. A. Smith's *Historical Geography*, pp. 471-9, a very fine description.

Verse 14. Opinions about Christ. "John Baptist," because of Herod's view? "Elijah," because it was popularly expected that Elijah would precede the Messiah (based on Mal. 4⁵); "Jeremiah," because of the Jewish tradition that Jeremiah would bring back the Ark which he had hidden in a cave.

Verse 16. Mark and Luke differ in their renderings of the words of Jesus, but all are *substantially* the same.

Verse 17. "flesh and blood": a synonym for "man" in current Jewish speech (Bruce).

Verse 18. Note the play on Peter's name: Petros and petra = a rock. Bruce says of this saying that it is "as personal as the most zealous advocates of Papal supremacy could desire, yet it is as remote as the poles from what they mean."

hell: rather Hades, the Greek name for the abode of the dead. By "gates" is meant power, for the gates of Eastern cities were the places of authority. The phrase means "the power of death," the greatest of all lower powers!

Verse 19. *the keys of the Kingdom; binding and losing.* It was a Jewish custom that, when a scribe was formally authorized to teach, a key was handed to him, and he received power to bind and loose. He

was a steward of truth, and his judgment on disputed points would be accurate if he were a true scribe. Peter was a steward of the grace of God, and he was to open the door for others to enter the Kingdom, and, so long as he and his fellow disciples (Matt. 18¹⁸) were true to their Lord, their judgment would be sound.

C. *The Lesson*

1. Jesus again wandering away from the crowds and from His enemies. This time amid the finest scenery in Palestine, and near a city which had been named by Herod Philip, the ruler of the region, after his master, Augustus Cæsar, and after himself. Read the fine passage in G. A. Smith, or consult Thomson, *The Land and the Book*. On the way Jesus and His disciples talk. What are men saying about Him? Jesus asks. They tell Him. Everybody is interested in the new Teacher. Who and what is He? Various opinions. Then Jesus turns on them. What do you think? How much hung on the answer! Had His teaching produced any real fruit? Peter's answer is one of the greatest sayings in the Bible. See if we can understand it, and what Jesus said about it.

2. *Peter's faith.* What did he say? What did he mean? The meaning of "the Christ." The Person long hoped for, who would bring God's redemption, who would be God's own Son and Servant—the fulfilment of the whole Old Testament expectation! Peter believed this of Jesus. How Jesus' heart would rejoice in such an answer.

3. *How did Peter come by such a faith?* Jesus says God gave it to him. But God teaches those who have open hearts. And Peter had learned to believe in

Jesus by being with Him, and watching Him and listening to Him. One of the most wonderful things in the New Testament is that those who lived with Him every day were those who came to believe Him to be the Son of God.

4. *What did Jesus say about Peter's faith?* He said (1) that *Peter was the foundation stone of the church.* The church is a building. This is the first stone. Why? because he believed in Jesus as Son of God. The members of this Church of Jesus are all stones in the building for the same reason. They all find in Jesus what Peter found. Tell the story of Charles Lamb who, when he and his friends were discussing what they would do if a great man came into the room said, "If Shakespeare came in we should all rise to our feet. If He came in we should all go down on our knees." (2) *Peter was to open the door to others.* This is always the result of real faith. It is always missionary. A man who believes anything wishes to spread it. And a man who believes helps others to believe. Peter received the *keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.* Dr. J. G. Paton, the famous missionary to the New Hebrides, was made a Christian first by seeing his father go into a little room every day to spend time in prayer for his children. A business man once went to the famous Scottish divine, Dr. Whyte, in a fit of depression. Dr. Whyte opened a drawer and pulled out a bundle of letters which he had received from people who had been led to Christ by the simple faith of this very business man!

5. *What does Peter's faith mean for us?* It means that the way to know the truth about Christ is to look at Him and listen to Him and live with Him before us.

If we do that we shall be able to say, "Thou art the Christ of God," and we shall be able to open the gates of the Kingdom of God to others.

Expression Work. 1. In what sense is this incident the climax of the Gospel story? 2. Why did Jesus not claim openly to be the Messiah before this time? 3. Why is it important to know that Jesus repeated the promise about "binding and loosing" to all the disciples (Matt. 18¹⁸)?

XXIV. THE CRISIS

THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

ST. JOHN 6^{15. 66-69}; ST. MATTHEW 16²¹⁻²⁷

A. *For the Teacher*

1. We have now arrived at the great division-point in our Lord's ministry. It is one of the few fixed points in time, and separates the period of prosperity and success from the period of opposition and defeat. This decisive point was created by two events which have been dealt with in the last two lessons. The first of these was the feeding of the five thousand which led to the effort to crown Jesus as a national leader, and very speedily thereafter to a complete reaction when He made it clear what His real Gospel was. This produced a great desertion of Him even by those who had been followers of His. Jesus saw that He had few real disciples in Galilee among the people. *He had failed.* His destiny lay plain before Him, and He decided to go and meet it, death at the hands of the authorities. The other event which made the crisis

was the confession of Peter. If He had few real disciples among the people, at least His closest followers were true. And it was therefore all the more necessary that they too should understand what was before Him, and perhaps before them also. And so He proceeds to explain this (Matt. 16²¹⁻²⁷). The facts are a little difficult to explain to children, but the main fact as to the crisis and its meaning must be made clear at least to older classes.

2. The discourse in John 6²⁶⁻⁶⁵ is really beyond the understanding of children. It may be summarized by saying that Jesus made it plain to the people that He had come to make them better men and women, not to lead them to victory, and that this offended them.

3. This lesson is really a great opportunity for the teacher to exhibit the greatness of Jesus and the real nature of the Christian religion as not a soft or easy thing but a demand on us for the same spirit as Jesus showed, the same courage and self-denial and devotion to the will of God. "If only I could get back to my pulpit," said a Puritan on his death-bed, "I would preach the difficulty of salvation."

B. Notes (on Matthew 16²¹⁻²⁷)

Verse 21. *began*. This is only the first of several warnings.

elders, chief priests, scribes: the chief constituents of the Sanhedrim, the Jewish court of justice.

be raised again. Some critics think Jesus could not have said this, since the disciples were absolutely in despair after the Crucifixion. But this ignores the psychological fact that people continually fail even to take in a novel or unwelcome truth. This is a common fact of experience.

Verse 22. *be it far from Thee!* : i.e. God avert it. Peter was "confounded and horrified" by the idea that the Messiah could be defeated and killed. He believed Jesus was the Messiah, but his faith had not grasped the truth of a Messiah victorious in death and reigning in the souls of men.

Verse 23. *Satan.* Jesus calls Peter "Satan" because here was the old enemy whom He had met at the Temptation, and in a more dangerous form. This was the same temptation that had come to Him in the wilderness and was repeated over and over again. Hence Jesus' anger, because the temptation was so severe.

Verse 23. *offence* : stumbling-stone, not a foundation-stone this time !

thou savourest, etc. : i.e. you are on the side of man and not of God, i.e. you care more for the preservation of life than for duty.

Verse 25. An example of Jesus' paradoxical method of teaching. *Life* in these verses means just all that is of value to us.

Verses 25-28. Three reasons for discipleship. Notice the threefold "for."

C. *The Lesson*

Introduction. Go back to the last two lessons. They are important because they mark the end of one period of Jesus' ministry and the beginning of another. Think of the longest day of the year. To what have we to look forward from it? always less and less sunshine, shorter and shorter days, till we come to mid-winter and the darkest day. Something like that in Jesus' life. The spring and summer are over, the time of popularity and great crowds, and we see now in front more and more clouds, more danger, opposition, deser-

tion and in the end death. Jesus saw this clearly now.

1. *How was this brought about?* (1) After the feeding of the five thousand the people were so enthusiastic that they wanted to crown Jesus King so that He might lead against the Romans and deliver the Jews from bondage (John 6¹⁵). Jesus was compelled to tell the people that He had no such intention. He had come to help them to believe in God and to make them good men and women. When the people understood this they turned against Him. They had no more use for Him. But already the rulers and the leading men were against Him. He refused to keep their petty rules. He made friends of people whom they despised. He claimed to be able to forgive sins, which they thought blasphemy. And if what He wished were done, the priesthood and all its wealth would be abolished. So they resolved on His death. Jesus knew this. (2) And so Jesus knew that He had few followers outside the Twelve. But Peter's confession had shown Him that they were loyal. When the people turned from Jesus, Peter, speaking for the Twelve said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." And at Cæsarea Philippi he had said, "Thou art the Christ." And so Jesus knew His band were faithful.

2. Jesus therefore came to two resolutions. One was to go straight on to Jerusalem where He knew death awaited Him. The other was to explain clearly to His band what lay in front of Him, and of them too, perhaps. They had reached the belief that He was Messiah, the Personal Saviour, but they did not yet quite understand *what kind of Messiah* Jesus was. They still believed in His triumph over all His enemies. And the time had

come to show them that He must die and by His death bring a greater kind of salvation than they had in their minds.

3. *The Fate of the Master* (²¹⁻²³). This was a terrible blow to them. "Killed"! and "must" be killed! They were unable as well as unwilling to take it in. Peter, prominent as usual, at once expressed their abhorrence of the idea. Jesus' severe rebuke. Why was Jesus so severe? Why did He call Peter "Satan"? Because Peter was presenting to Jesus the very same temptation that Satan had presented in the wilderness, suggesting to Jesus to take the easier way, not God's way. The old evil temptation came back and had to be rejected again. That is why Jesus called Peter "Satan" and said to him, "You are not on God's side, but on man's." You are more concerned about My life than about My duty. This temptation had often come to Jesus and was to come again in Gethsemane. We see again the cost to Jesus of taking God's way.

4. *The Fate of the Disciple* (²⁴⁻²⁷). Jesus asks from His followers the same as He Himself gave. Notice the two things that are true of a disciple of Jesus. He must deny himself. That is to say, he must put self second and God's will first. By self is meant ease, wealth, ambition, gain, pleasure. All these *second* and God's will first. The other thing is taking up his cross. A cross is something that gives trouble or pain. And Jesus means that His disciple must take up anything that is difficult bravely and carry it if it comes to him in the way of duty. No whining, no complaints, no discontent. Courage! and a cheerful heart!

Jesus gives three reasons why He asks these things of us. (1) One is what is called a paradox (²⁵). "Who-

soever saves his life shall lose it, and whosoever loses his life for Christ's sake shall find it." That is to say, if you put self first and God second you will miss happiness and blessing altogether. (2) The second reason is that there is nothing so important in the world as goodness, or a good conscience, or acting up to our belief, or doing as Jesus did (²⁶). If you had the whole world and everything in it, the soul is far more important, far more precious. And (3) Jesus says that in eternity everybody will get the full value in happiness and blessing for what He has done in this life (²⁷). It is not only best for our happiness and welfare *here*, to live as Jesus did for God's will, but best for our eternal happiness.

5. *What a Christian is.* Now this that Jesus told His disciples is true to-day and always. It is true that it is best in every sense to put self second. Why, it is true even in games! You can't be a good football player if you put self first. And it is true for our character. When Sir Philip Sidney refused the offer of water and gave it to a common soldier who was wounded worse than himself he showed himself to be a Christian man because he put himself second. Describe *Punch's* cartoon of the King of the Belgians at the beginning of the Great War. The German Emperor whispers to him, "You have lost all, haven't you?" to which the young King answers, "No, not my soul." Some one said that "no man is fully alive unless he is ready to die for something." Tell the story of Balzac's "Wild Ass's Skin." A man bought a skin in an old shop. It had one virtue. Every wish its possessor wished for himself came true. But each time he wished for himself the skin shrank a little. And as it shrank its possessor's life shrank. Until at last skin and man

perished together. It is a great story and a great parable of Jesus' paradox here. Or, tell the story of the sailors on the *Birkenhead*, who cheered as the boats holding women and children (who alone could be saved) left the ship. And show that this is what Jesus meant by being a Christian.

Expression Work. 1. Give examples of what it is to be a Christian from your own knowledge. 2. Show how the temptation of the wilderness came back to Jesus at this time and also in Gethsemane. 3. In what respect was Peter's faith at Cæsarea Philippi still lacking ?

XXV. THE TRANSFIGURATION

HEAR HIM !

ST. MARK 9²⁻⁸

A. *For the Teacher*

1. The first question that the teacher has to answer is : did this actually happen ? Did Moses and Elijah talk with Jesus ? Did the garments of Jesus actually shine ? Professor Bruce in the *Expositor's Greek Testament*, the best brief commentary on the Greek text in English, says : "There appeared to the three disciples, not necessarily an absolutely real objective presence of Moses and Elias. All purposes would be served by an appearance in *vision*. Sufficient objectivity is guaranteed by the vision being enjoyed by all the three, which would have been impossible if purely subjective." This seems a sensible view. It is to be remembered that the disciples were not half awake all

the time. So sleepy was Peter that he began to talk nonsense. "The remark of Peter" (5), says Rawlinson (*Westminster Commentary on Mark*), "is precisely the kind of remark—half-related to the supposed situation, semi-reasonable, yet fundamentally foolish—which might be made by a man in a dream, or in the strange half-hypnotic condition in which men see visions (and hear voices). The psychology of such experiences is to-day being seriously studied, and enough is known to justify abundantly the remark of Miss Evelyn Underhill that 'in the present state of the evidence, a definite rejection of these narratives is as unscientific as the most pious credulity.'" It may be added that this psychological reading of the incident does not preclude the conviction that the experience was the means of a real revelation from the unseen.

2. Mark and Matthew regard this vision as sent mainly (or wholly) for the encouragement of the disciples—"transfigured *before them*," "*appeared unto them*," "*hear ye Him*," "*bringeth them up*." Luke suggests that it occurred for Jesus' sake also. The former is the point of view in the lesson below.

B. Notes

Verse 2. *Peter, James and John* : the three whom Jesus took with Him on occasions of special importance.
a high mountain : now generally recognized to be Mount Hermon, near Cæsarea Philippi, or rather one of its spurs.

transfigured : literally "changed" (2 Cor. 3¹⁸).

Verse 3. *shining* : R.V. glistening ; used of a flashing sword in Nahum 3³, or sunshine on shields.

fuller. The fuller's trade was cleansing linen garments with "*fuller's earth*." See 2 Kings 18¹⁷, Isaiah 7³, Mal. 3² (Stock).

Verse 5. *it is good for us to be here.* Rather “it is good that we are here,” to do honour to the heavenly visitants.

tabernacles, rather “booths.”

Verse 6. *wist*: knew. Old English “to wis.” Hence wise, wit.

sore afraid: “frightened out of their wits” (Bruce).

Verse 7. *cloud*: the symbol of the divine presence (Exod. 16¹⁰; 19^{9, 16}; 1 Kings 8¹⁰).

Verse 8. The vision vanishes.

C. *The Lesson*

The situation. The disciples depressed by the words of Jesus (last lesson) about His death. In great need of encouragement, this vision of the greatness of Jesus is sent to reinforce their faith. Where it happened. One of the spurs of Hermon, the highest mountain in Palestine (9,200 feet high), high up among the snows. What happened. It was in the dim evening light. What they saw and heard in their dazed sleepy state. Voices came to them and a dazzling light shone on them. They saw in Jesus what they had never seen before. His face shone like the sun and His garments glistened with light. Other spirits seemed to be talking with Him, and the apostles were sure afterwards that these were Moses and Elijah, the great figures of the past. And then a bright cloud overshadowed them, and they knew that all they had seen and heard was true and had been sent by God. Indeed, they heard the voice of God Himself saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear ye Him.” It was an overwhelming experience that made them fall on their faces. When they ventured to look up there was no one but Jesus and themselves there on the mountain slope. But they had seen the

glory of the Lord ! (I have followed the suggestions of Miss Hetty Lee in this sketch in her *Lessons on the Life of our Lord Jesus Christ*).

What did this vision mean ?

1. For one thing, *it threw a great light on Jesus*. What was the “transfiguration”? It was not a change from outside. It was the out-shining of the glory that was in Jesus. And it came when Jesus was at prayer (Luke). To explain this, describe the glory on Moses’ face after forty days’ communion with God (Exod. 34²⁹). Sydney Smith said of Francis Horner that the ten commandments were written on his face. Victor Hugo said that the human face is formed by the conscience and the life. How holiness refines the face, and goodness transfigures even plain people. Think of what the out-shining of the holiness of Jesus must have given to Jesus! After His Resurrection the body of Jesus was so spiritualized that it was hardly governed by material laws. Something of this glorification was seen by the disciples now.

2. It meant also that the disciples saw now that Jesus was the crown and glory of all God’s revelation. Law and Prophecy, Moses and Elijah, all the Old Testament history found fulfilment in Jesus. God was leading up to Jesus through all the ages! a wonderful truth. Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah—all were pointing to Jesus as the crown of God’s purpose. “Last of all He sent His Son.”

3. The final meaning, and greatest meaning, of the incident is the testimony of God to His Son. The voice out of the cloud. The cloud was God’s presence. This was God’s “Amen” to Peter’s great confession, showing how truly Jesus was the Glory of God.

4. And now what is the meaning for us ? It is all in the words of the divine voice, "Hear Him." It just means that Christ is everything. It means that there is none like Jesus. He is supreme Lord. In Him we see God. In Him we may see "the glory of the Lord," His love, His pity, His power to help. Religion means Jesus for all who have seen what the disciples saw. Therefore we must listen to Him, and do just what He says. Dean Colet founded a school in London in St. Paul's Churchyard, and dedicated it to the Child Jesus. He put in the school an image of Jesus standing over the master's chair, with the motto "Hear ye Him." Let that be our motto.

Expression Work. 1. Draw a picture of Mount Hermon with Jesus and the disciples. 2. Find out the three occasions on which the divine voice came saying, "This is My beloved Son." 3. Find out the occasions when Jesus took the three apostles with Him.

XXVI. PRAYER

WHY SHOULD WE PRAY ?

ST. LUKE 11¹⁻¹³

A. *For the Teacher*

1. There are few subjects so urgently needing to be explained to children as the Christian idea of prayer. Wrong ideas are very common and do a great deal of harm. In particular, the idea of prayer as a kind of magic thing or Aladdin's lamp, by which we may gain from God what He would not otherwise be willing to give, has made for much unhappiness and even un-

belief. And Jesus' teaching in this very passage is peculiarly liable to misunderstanding unless carefully explained and qualified by sayings elsewhere. The main thing to make clear is that all prayer is prayer for God's will. We start from that, and if that is made plain the rest will fall into place.

2. At the same time it should be shown that prayer had a great place both in our Lord's teaching and in His practice. His injunctions to ask of God are definite and simple. And His own habit of prayer is constant. Let the teacher look up the following passages taken only from one evangelist, and this impression of Jesus' prayerfulness will be deepened (Luke 3²¹; 5¹⁶; 6¹²; 9^{18, 28, 29}; 11¹; 22⁴¹⁻⁴⁴; 23³⁴).

3. The real difficulties about prayer are not intellectual but practical. All merely intellectual and theoretical objections to the use of prayer are equally objections to our doing anything at all. The serious difficulty is that of "unanswered prayer," the experience of asking without receiving, and this difficulty must be kept in view in teaching the lesson.

4. Accordingly this lesson is not so much occupied in expounding the words of Jesus in detail (they are perfectly plain), as in discussing in a simple way, and by question and answer, the whole subject raised by Jesus' words. The Lord's Prayer is omitted for separate treatment.

B. Notes

Verse 5. *at midnight*: the best time for travelling in the East is night. Midnight convenient for a traveller but not for the householder! (Bruce).

Verse 6. *I have nothing*: not because of poverty, but because loaves were baked in the morning.

Verse 8. *importunity*: literally “shamelessness.”

There is a Greek proverb, “Impudence is a god,” and a Jewish one, “Impudence is an uncrowned king.”

Verses 11–12. Note that the two objects in each case were like each other. The idea is that a parent will not only not fail to give but will not *mock* His child.

scorpion. “A little round animal (lobster-like) lurking in stone walls, with a sting in its tail” (Bruce), rather like an egg.

Verse 13. *evil*. “If you whose nature is to keep what you have . . . how much more will the Father, whose nature is *benignant*. . . .”

C. *The Lesson*

Introduction. How Jesus came to speak of prayer now. He often spoke of it. A favourite subject. He spoke very strongly about it, and said “Pray often, and *go on praying*.” Here, for example, He tells a story, and then uses the strongest words about prayer He ever used. The story means, “If a *friend* can be pestered into giving . . . how much more a Friend who is eager to give.” And the command to pray means, “If any ordinary father will not mock his children but give them the best thing . . . how much more the Heavenly Father who is all love and kindness.” Well, let us talk about this.

1. What is prayer? It is just speaking to God. And it is natural. We can’t help praying. Describe Millet’s picture “The Angelus.” We may praise God or confess our sins or ask things from Him. All these are forms of prayer. But the one that needs discussing is asking.

2. Do we get all we ask for? No! Suppose your father was the kindest man on earth, would he give you everything you asked for? No. Why? Because he knows what is good for you, and you often don't. We must not think that praying is like Aladdin using his lamp, and so be disappointed and hurt if we do not get all we ask for. God may say "no" to us, or He may say "later on," or "in another way." But, to begin with, we must be sure of one thing, that *God's will is best for us, and that God will give us what is good for us.* So that when we pray we must always try to wish for what God sees to be good.

"And so I do not dare to pray
For winds to waft me on *my* way,
But leave it to a higher Will
To stay, or speed me, trusting still
That all is well, and sure that He
Who launched my bark will sail with me
Through storm and calm, and will not fail,
Whatever breezes may prevail,
To land me, every peril past,
Within the haven, safe at last.
Then whatsoever wind doth blow,
My heart is glad to have it so.
Then blow it east, or blow it west,
The wind that blows, that wind is best."

3. But then, why ask in that case? Because it is necessary. God cannot give without our asking. Explain clearly that all God does and gives in this world is done with us and by means of us. He puts the coal in the ground, but we have to dig it out. Electricity in the air, wireless waves, healing powers in nature. Everything God does is a cooperation with us. He gets His will done through us, by our deeds, by our service, by our words, and *by our prayers.* God needs

our prayers to get His will done. He cannot do without us. Take a sick man. It is God's will, perhaps, that He should get better. How is God to heal the man? Through the doctor, the nurse, the medicine, and through *prayer*. Prayer is one of God's means. We must not deprive Him of it.

4. And this the reason why we must *go on praying*. We do not know how long God may need us to pray. It is one of the conditions for getting anything in this world that we should persevere. Tell the story of Columbus in detail—a magnificent illustration of perseverance in prayer. Also Jacob at Peniel, and Abraham's intercession for the cities of the Plain. Don't be like the leopard that, if it fails to get its prey at the first leap, cannot be induced to try again. Jesus laid great stress on persevering in prayer, and He knew.

5. But there is still a question : "If God is so kind and knows what we need, why should we ask?" Well, (1) Jesus says here, "Ask Him because He is kind and knows." And I think this means that we should ask God for *everything* we wish, not for goodness only, but for a bicycle, or a sound sleep, or a spinning top. We ought to talk to God about everything, not expecting to get all we ask, but knowing that we shall get what is good. (2) Because, as I have shown, God needs our prayers. He is kind and knows, but cannot give without our asking. (3) Because Jesus has taught us very plainly that we must ask, and go on asking. (4) Because Jesus prayed and asked His Father for what He needed. But Jesus always said, "Not my will, but Thine be done," and so should we. And He said, "If ye abide in Me, and My words in you, ye shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15⁷)

Expression Work. 1. Look up all the words of Jesus about prayer. 2. Find all the times when Jesus Himself prayed.

XXVII. THE LORD'S PRAYER

WHAT CHRISTIANITY IS

ST. MATTHEW 6⁹⁻¹³

A. For the Teacher

1. One reason why the Lord's Prayer should be carefully explained is that it is the most complete statement in the Gospels of what Christianity is. It sums up all our Lord's main teaching. And, as it is constantly repeated by children, they ought to know what it means. This will excuse and justify the departure in this lesson from a sound maxim of teaching, viz. that there should be only one truth taught in any lesson. The aim of the teacher here is to make as certain as he can that the children will understand what they are saying when they repeat the Lord's Prayer, and what it implies when they say it sincerely.

2. There are two versions of the prayer, one in St. Matthew and one in St. Luke. It is possible Jesus gave the prayer on different occasions, and in any case the fact that there are two versions is a sufficient indication that the prayer is a model, to show us how we should pray and what thoughts should be in our minds when we speak to God as His children. There is no suggestion that we *must* use this prayer, but only that this is how we should pray. "After this manner." Bruce holds that the version in St. Matthew is the original and not that in St. Luke. Perhaps it is truer to say that both

are originals. St. Luke's version, as Westcott and Hort give it, is as follows : " Father ! Hallowed be Thy name. Come Thy kingdom. The bread each day give us daily. And forgive our sins, for we also forgive everyone owing us. And bring us not into temptation."

B. Notes

Verse 9. *name.* It is to be noted that in the Bible name and character are always closely connected. Names were given from some incident at birth, or some characteristic of the person. And names were changed when any critical event took place. Jacob becomes Israel, Simon becomes Peter, Saul becomes Paul. God's names always implied something about Himself. God's name is therefore Himself as He makes Himself known.

Verse 11. *daily.* There is great controversy about this, the only difficult word in the prayer. Two possible meanings : (1) for the coming day, or (2) needful, i.e. for subsistence. The ordinary translation, "our daily bread" expresses the sense sufficiently.

Verse 13. *evil.* Probably the older translation is more correct, "from evil" not "from the evil one." Both Bruce and Peake think so.

For Thine is the kingdom, etc. : omitted by the R.V. and thought generally to be a liturgical addition, annexed to the prayer in the course of its use in worship.

C. *The Lesson*

1. We have been trying to learn the true way to pray and the reason for praying. Now Jesus not only taught these things to His disciples, but He gave them a prayer which they might use as a model. What a

model is (aeroplane, boat, tank). It is the "Lord's Prayer" because the Lord taught it, and it tells us both how we are to pray, and what it means to be a Christian. Let us first go over it. There are six petitions.

(1) *Our Father . . . Heaven.* What God is, a Father, and a great Father, loving and powerful. We are to trust Him not only because He loves us, but because He is able to help us.

(2) *Hallowed be Thy name.* God's name is Himself (see notes) and all that makes Him known. A name in the Bible is what makes a person known; therefore we are to reverence God and all that makes God known, the Bible, the sacraments, nature. That is, we are to think and speak of God with humble, reverent feelings and thoughts.

(3) *Thy Kingdom come.* God's Kingdom is in the hearts and lives of all who love and trust Him. And this petition means "May the time come when God will rule in all hearts and all men will love Him and trust Him."

(4) *Thy will be done . . .* This is something more than (3). Jesus means by "will" the commanding will of God. God tells us what is right. God purposes and ordains what is good. God's will is a blessed, loving, right and good will, and if it were done on earth right would prevail over wrong, and all evil would be done away. We ought to wish and pray for this. God's will is not something to be endured but to be sought, because it is best.

(5) *Give us . . . bread.* This means all that we need day by day for our life. We are to ask for this each day, and depend on God for it.

(6) *Forgive us . . . us.* We need not only earthly blessings but spiritual, for our souls as well as our bodies. And our first need is to be forgiven, because we are sinners and because forgiveness is what we need in order to be free to live rightly. When God forgives He blots out the stain and guilt of our sins, and we start afresh. And Jesus says something very serious here. If we do not forgive those who sin against us God will not forgive us. God cannot forgive an unforgiving heart.

(7) *Lead us . . . evil.* Temptation may work out good if it is bravely met with trust in God. But it is always dangerous, and few of us are heroes. Jesus puts into the lips of the ordinary weak man a petition that he may not be led into a temptation which may be too strong for him. In Gethsemane He said again to His weak disciples, "Pray that you enter not into temptation." But, we are told to pray, "in any case make victory certain for us. Give us the strength to resist and to overcome."

(8) The words at the end were not uttered by Jesus but added when the prayer was used. They mean, "for it is *God's* rule we pray to be seen in the world, and *God's* power is to bring it about, and *God* is to be honoured when it happens."

2. Now let us gather together the lessons Jesus means us to learn by this prayer, the truths He wishes us to have in our minds.

(1) *God First.* Notice that we first of all say "Our Father," which is an act of trust in God. And we pray first that His name, His Kingdom, His will may prevail. Before we pray for anything for ourselves, we ask that God may rule in our hearts. Not any success or

comfort or happiness for ourselves, but *first of all* God. This is very difficult. Can we put God first? Jesus did. And to be a real Christian is to do this. In Gethsemane He said, "Not My will, but Thine be done." Much of our unhappiness, and all our sin, come from putting our desires and ourselves first. Quote the famous saying of Wolsey, "If I had served my God as I have served my king . . ." We cannot be Christians if we put ourselves before God.

(2) *We depend on God for everything*, both for our bodies and for our souls. Everything comes from Him. And we should thus look at all our life and its blessings as coming from the hand of God. We should live in continual trust in Him, and *daily* look up in dependence on Him. Now this means that we ought to ask God for everything we need, that we should pray for *everything* we wish, not only spiritual blessings but everything of every kind. The famous Dr. John Brown, author of *Rab and his Friends*, once went to hear Dr. Candlish preaching in Edinburgh, and said afterwards, "It was splendid, He first made you feel you could ask for *anything*, a five-pound note, and then he *dared* you to have any wish but 'Thy will be done.'" And, further, this means that we can never *worry*. We live for the day, and to-morrow is in God's hands.

(3) Another great truth of the Lord's Prayer is *Brotherhood*. There is no "I" or "me." It is all "we" and "us." *Our Father*, give *us our* bread, forgive *us*, deliver *us*. We ask nothing for ourselves that we do not wish others also to have. Selfishness is killed by the spirit of Jesus. Because we say "Father" and all are His children, we say also "Our Father," and all are brothers. God's kingdom is a realm of

brothers who seek the good of others as well as their own. “Love your neighbour as yourself.” It is part of this truth that we cannot come to God with any hope of blessing if we have an unforgiving heart.

These are the things we mean when we say the Lord’s Prayer with sincerity. They are all difficult, but we are not Christians if we do not at least mean them and wish them to be true.

Expression Work. Find in our Lord’s words and life elsewhere passages that explicitly teach these different truths.

XXVIII. THE UNRIGHTEOUS STEWARD

PRUDENCE IN RELIGION

ST. LUKE 16¹⁻⁹

A. *For the Teacher*

1. This is considered a “difficult” passage, because of its supposed low ethical tone. This general objection is intensified by the phrase in verse 8, “the Lord commended the unrighteous steward.” If this is part of the parable (as seems obvious to me) and not St. Luke’s comment, then clearly the lord who praised the steward was the steward’s own master, who could not withhold admiration for his rascally servant’s cleverness. But, even if Bruce is right in saying that the “lord” here meant is Jesus, I do not see any difficulty. It is not the servant’s dishonesty that is praised, and the whole point of the story is that religious people can learn from bad men of business how to face the future. I cannot see any difficulty in this. “Who but Jesus would have

had the courage to extract a lesson from conduct like that of the unrighteous steward ? ” (Bruce).

2. There are two lessons suggested by the story, (1) learning from the worldly, or (2) the right use of money. The two are not, however, exclusive, and the lesson below includes them both, since the *general* lesson is about prudence in view of the future, and the *particular* example of this chosen is the use of money.

3. The verses 10–13 are probably St. Luke’s comment, designed to remove any suspicion of doubtful morality about our Lord’s bold words. They have nothing to do with the point Jesus makes, but they correct any tendency to interpret Him as approving dishonesty. They are therefore no part of this lesson.

B. Notes

Verse 1. *steward* : the agent of a landed proprietor who is about to be dismissed for dishonest practices.

Verse 3. *dig . . . beg* : the two alternatives open to him, manual work as he knew it in an agricultural district, or begging.

Verse 4. *into their houses* : not permanently, but just to help him over the first days.

Verse 5. *debtors*. Probably farmers who paid their rent in kind. If so the steward had taken larger amounts than they owed, and when these were altered they became just what the men really owed. Bruce and Trench and Stock all think they were buyers of produce from the estate and that the steward had not yet received their money. Either sense is possible.

Verse 6. *measures of oil* : “ baths ” of oil. A bath was 9 gallons.

Verse 7. *measure of wheat*: “cors”—a cor was 14 bushels.

Verse 8. *the lord*: “his lord” (R.V.).

in their generation: “for their own generation” (R.V.); “in dealing with their own generation” (Moffatt).

Verse 9. *of the mammon*: by means of the mammon.

friends. Bruce thinks these are the poor.

ye fail: “it shall fail” (i.e. wealth, which fails at death).

everlasting habitations: “eternal abodes” (Moffatt).

The poor whom you have helped are there to welcome you!

C. *The Lesson*

1. Why should a boy work hard at school? to prepare himself for a career. Why does a farmer sow? with an eye to the harvest. Why do people insure their lives? to make the future secure. Sir Walter Scott bewailed that he had wasted his opportunities for learning in youth. He might have done so much more, he felt, if he had had real knowledge. Well, why are not religious people like that? Why can they not learn from what everybody does in worldly matters? Everybody thinks of the future. And we have an eternal future. Why do we not think about it and provide for it? Jesus asked that question and told a story to illustrate the point.

2. The steward. A factor, dishonest, caught at his thieving and about to be dismissed. What he does. Thinks! (“what shall I do?”). Finds a way (“I have it!” verse 4). Plans how the future will be safe for him. His plan. Makes friends for himself. Praised by his master, not for his dishonesty, but for his prudence.

3. And Jesus says, "Look how worldly people act ! You can learn even from bad men if you watch them. They are wise for themselves. They are prudent. They look to the future. Look at their care and foresight. Everybody with sense does that. Now ought Christians not to take as much pains about their religion as people do about their comfort and success ? Our religion would be a far finer thing if we spent as much thought and care and foresight on it as these people do on their business. God and eternity are far greater and more important than business, and yet we spend so little thought and attention and pains on them !

4. And especially we ought to be as prudent about the future as worldly people are. We ought to live our life day by day now so that we shall have a happy and secure future. What we are doing now will tell in the life after death. Jesus speaks here of one special way in which we may secure one thing at least in the great future. We may make certain we shall have friends to welcome us ! And who are these ? The people to whom we are kind here. Suppose you helped a poor man here, would it not be nice to find him a friend to welcome you in the unseen land ? This does not mean that we shall go to heaven if we help the poor here, or that we can buy a place in heaven with our money, or that we can earn salvation. But Jesus, who speaks a great deal about money, says that the way to use money is to help others with it. And if we are generous and unselfish, and, instead of hoarding it or spending it selfishly, we use it to succour the needy, we shall find these people to give us a warm welcome in a life beyond the grave. The selfish will have no friends to greet them ! Is that not a fine thought about the use of money ?

Expression Work. Turn up all the passages in which Jesus speaks of money, and say what you think His teaching means (the Rich Young Ruler; Dives and Lazarus; the Rich Fool; Matthew 6, and so on).

XXIX. THE TEN LEPERS GRATITUDE

ST. LUKE 17¹¹⁻¹⁹

A. *For the Teacher*

1. The teacher will have to exercise his mind as to how much he is to say about the disease of leprosy. Too lurid a picture might do harm to sensitive children. In any case he ought to emphasize the fact that it does not occur in this country. But, on the other hand, the benefits these lepers received from Jesus, and therefore the sin of their ingratitude, are heightened if the horror of this disease is made clear. Leprosy was a horrible disease of the skin and limbs. It was incurable. It gradually increased until the whole body was affected. It was hereditary. And what added to the misery of the poor leper was that he was shut off from his fellows. He dare not come near them. It was a miserable, lonely, maimed life of suffering. The leper was banished from the comforts and duties of fellowship with others. And there were no hospitals for treatment, and no leper settlements with doctors and nurses. The leper was looked on as an outcast both from man and God, for leprosy was regarded as a "judgment." The lepers themselves believed that! One of the most beautiful things Jesus ever did was to *touch* the leper mentioned

in Mark 1⁴⁰⁻⁵. No one had ever done such a thing to a leper. There used to be lepers in England, though there are none now, because we have learned the blessing of cleanliness. In some churches there was a window called "the leper's blink" through which he could see and hear the service and receive the sacrament. There is one at the little church in Kirkmichael on Speyside to be seen to-day. There are many lepers in India, Africa and China to-day, and one of the finest forms of missionary labour is that of missions to lepers. One of the most famous of these missionaries was Father Damien, whose work is described by Robert Louis Stevenson in his famous "Open Letter." It is the Christian religion that has brought the only happiness and help the leper receives to-day.

2. The feature of this story is not the healing of the lepers but the conduct of the lepers after they were healed. Only one came back to thank Jesus and therefore the obvious lesson of the story is the duty of being grateful and showing it.

B. Notes

Verse 11. *through the midst of*: "through between." That is to say, Jesus travelled along the borders of both Samaria and Galilee. This explains why there was a mixture of Jews and Samaritans in the company of lepers. Misery levels all distinctions.

Verse 12. *stood afar off*. The leper had to keep a fixed distance and cry "Unclean!" when any one approached.

Verse 14. *priests* (plural): either to priests of their respective districts or of different nationalities. The leper had to get a formal certificate of im-

munity before he could return to the society of his fellows.

as they went. These men all had faith and were healed as they ventured on the word of Jesus.

Verse 18. Best taken as a question as in R.V.

C. *The Lesson*

1. Begin by mentioning the fact of quarantine or isolation. Why are some patients shut away from people and not allowed to see anybody? A good reason. But it is only for a time. If they were shut away altogether that would be very sad. And if they had a horrid illness which gave them suffering and discomfort as well, with no doctors to look after them and no comfort and no hospital, and no hope of getting better, that would be terrible. But all that was true of lepers. Show the physical misery, the loneliness, the hopelessness of their lives. To-day there are many lepers in the East, but much is done for them by heroic missionaries. Tell the story of Father Damien. To-day even lepers get some happiness from knowing about Jesus Christ and knowing that God loves them. Nothing of all this was true of the poor lepers of old in Palestine. They believed that God was angry with them, and had sent this disease as a judgment.

2. Think then of the *benefits* Jesus gave these men by healing them. They were cured of a terrible disease. They got health. They were restored to their life among their fellows. They could go about like other people. They could *touch* people. They could play with others. They could work at a trade. They could go to parties. They could go to church. They had the happiness of living like other people. Blessings almost

beyond our imagination. But try to picture the contrast with their previous life.

3. Yet only one of the ten who had been healed came back to thank Jesus! Ten had faith, because all were healed through faith, and only one was grateful. And so faith is nine times commoner than gratitude. A Russian poet tells how once the Lord invited all the virtues to dinner. They all came, and were very pleasant and agreeable. Only two of them seemed strangers to each other:

“Benevolence and gratitude
Alone of all seemed strangers yet;
They stared when they were introduced
On earth they never once had met.”

Is gratitude as rare as that? At any rate, the Bible is continually telling us to be thankful. Look up passages like “In everything give thanks.” It looks as if God knows we are apt to forget our benefits and our benefactors.

4. *Why were the nine ungrateful?* Because they were selfish. They were so eager to get back to all the blessings they had missed so long that the Giver of them passed out of their minds. And also because it would have been a trouble to them. And perhaps they were afraid Jesus might ask them to be His disciples! Point out how real gratitude means unselfishness and pains and trouble, and sometimes sacrifice. It costs something to show our gratitude to God or man.

5. *Why should the nine have come back?* Because it is a duty to be grateful to those who have helped us and made us happy and given us benefits. Our parents, our teachers, our friends, God, Jesus—how much we owe them. Go over our blessings, health, home, work,

friends, books, comfort. Quote the famous lines of Robert Burns :

“ The bridegroom may forget the bride
Was made his wedded wife yest'ren ;
The monarch may forget the crown
That on his head one hour has been ;
The mother may forget the child
That smiles sae sweetly on her knee ;
But I'll remember thee, Glencairn,
And a' that thou hast done for me.”

Can we say the same to Jesus ? or to those who have been kind to us ?

6. Look at this man. How beautiful his conduct is. He gave up getting the coveted certificate of cleansing to come back at once to thank Jesus, “ glorifying God and giving Jesus thanks.” How splendid that picture is ! And see how great a blessing he got in return. The nine got rid of their leprosy. But this man got a new Friend in Jesus. He got a blessing they missed. There is *always* a very great blessing for the grateful. They get far more than they give. If you are thankful to Jesus you get to know Jesus better, and make a friend of Him for life. Tell the story of the famous “ Road of Gratitude ” made by the chiefs of Samoa in return for what Robert Louis Stevenson did for them. They (chiefs every one of them) worked as navvies making a road to his house, because he had taken their part and helped them in need. One of the most beautiful stories in the world.

Expression Work. 1. Let the children write down the things for which they should be grateful. 2. Get the children to make a collection as an offering for one of the leper missions.

XXX. JESUS AND CHILDREN

ST. MARK 10¹³⁻¹⁶; ST. MATTHEW 11¹⁶⁻¹⁷;
ST. MATTHEW 18¹⁻⁴

A. For the Teacher

No presentation of Jesus would be complete that left out His relation to children. What has been attempted in this lesson is to bring together all that is characteristic in that relation. Jesus loved children, and He penetrated to the essential quality of childhood. This is not innocence or humility, for many children are neither humble nor innocent, but trust, receptiveness, dependence. This was what seemed to Him divine in children, and it was this He asked that we should never lose, because it made us children of God. The teacher should aim at presenting Jesus as the never-failing Friend of children. The power of a teacher's religious teaching will depend largely on his ability to make the personality of Jesus attractive and compelling. Here in this lesson is one of his great opportunities. Incidentally, part of the real picture of Jesus is His knowledge of us. He knows what is good in us, and He knows what is bad. These are the two things then, the teacher should try to show clearly, Jesus' love of children, and His knowledge of them.

B. Notes

St. Mark x. 13. *young children*. St. Luke says "babes." "touch them": probably for some magical influence. But Jesus took them in His arms!

His disciples rebuked. . . . "Apart from the Gospels, I cannot find that early Christian literature exhibits the slightest sympathy towards the

young" (Burkitt, *The Gospel History*, quoted in Peake).

Verse 14. *of such is the Kingdom of God*: rather "The kingdom belongs to such," i.e. to the receptive and the simple (verse 15 states this).

Verse 16. *blessed them*: blessed them fervently or heartily.

St. Matthew xi. 16, 17. *in the market place*: where people congregated for all purposes, business and pleasure.

Chapter xviii., 3. *become as little children*. "A king's child has no more thought of greatness than a beggar's" (Bruce).

C. *The Lesson*

To-day we are going to try to understand about Jesus and children, what is said about this in the Gospels. What can you remember about that? Elicit details (e.g. the raising of Jairus' daughter, the boy who helped Jesus with his loaves and fishes, the children who sang praises in the Temple; and especially the three following).

1. *Jesus blessing Children*. Tell the incident—the interference of the disciples. Jesus' memorable words. Picture Jesus with the young ones in His arms! Now that means that Jesus loves children and is glad to have them come to Him and be brought to Him. He is the *Friend of children*. Now this is the real meaning of baptism. The whole meaning of baptism is in these words, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, for the Kingdom of God belongs to them." Jesus belongs to the children and they belong to Him. That is why we dedicate them, offer them, bring them to Him in baptism. But

there is something more. What does it mean to "come to Jesus"? It simply means to trust Him, to believe that He loves us, and will help us, and to look to Him as our best Friend.

2. *Jesus knows Children.* He is not blind to their faults! Once He was watching a lot of children playing at marriages and funerals. And, like some children today, they began to quarrel. One side wanted to play at marriages, and wouldn't play at funerals, and the other side the opposite. And each said, "We won't play with you." Jesus was sorry to see this selfish quarrelsome spirit. It is a horrid thing to see children who have not learned to "play the game," who quarrel and fight because they don't get their own way. They spoil all games. You can't play properly if you are selfish. Our religion must come into our games as much as into our prayers. Religion is no use unless it helps us to play properly as well as to work properly. Look how Jesus played the game. He wants us to be unselfish as He was in everything, and especially in our play.

3. *Jesus shows us the right kind of Children.* The disciples were talking about who was to be greatest in Jesus' Kingdom. Was it to be Peter? or James, or John? Who was to have the first place? Jesus, for answer, took a child and showed him to the disciples, and said, "Do you know what we like about this child? It is that he trusts some one, that he depends on some one. He does not thrust himself forward. He feels he needs guidance and strength, and help from some one wiser and stronger than himself. Now," said Jesus, "keep that spirit all through your life. Don't thrust yourself forward. The really great man is the humble man, the man who knows how much he needs God's

guidance and help every day, and who is willing to take a lowly place.” Jesus loved that spirit and said, “The Kingdom of God belongs to such people.” In the best sense Jesus means us to *keep young*. Give as an example of this the Baptist who said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” Duke Godfrey of Lorraine once found his brother Frederick washing dishes in the kitchen of a monastery and said to him sarcastically, “This is a fine occupation for a count!” To which Frederick replied, “You are quite right, Duke. I ought indeed to think myself honoured by this service for the Master.”

Expression Work. 1. Write out a list of all the passages where Jesus does anything for children, or says anything about them. 2. Draw a picture of any of the scenes mentioned above.

XXXI. THE RICH YOUNG RULER SINGLE-MINDEDNESS

ST. MARK 10¹⁷⁻²²

A. *For the Teacher*

1. Mark’s version is taken as the basis of this lesson because it is obviously the original. St. Matthew has altered the original question in verse 18 to “Why asketh thou me concerning the good?” to avoid the idea that Jesus repudiates the ascription of goodness to Himself. The very difficulty of St. Mark’s account shows that this is what really happened.

2. The main interest in this incident is that it shows us our Lord’s way of dealing with inquirers; very different from the modern way. He showed them how

hard salvation is. Compare St. Luke 9⁵⁷⁻⁶² (the three aspirants). Remember Garibaldi's famous proclamation in which he called the youth of Italy to his banner, and offered them only wounds and death !

3. The 18th verse is the difficulty in this story. Four interpretations have been given of it : (1) Our Lord meant by His reply not to deny that He was good, but to lead the young man to the conclusion that He was God. (2) The words are a confession by Jesus that He was a sinner. (3) The words mean "Do not make ascriptions of goodness a matter of courtesy. Think what it *means*. What is good ?" The first lesson Jesus taught the young man was to use his words carefully, to think of what they meant before he used them (Bruce). (4) The words are an expression of that humility which was part of the moral perfection of His character. All human goodness derives from God, and this was no less true in the case of the ideally perfect human character of the Man Christ Jesus than in that of others. The Lord, therefore, refuses the ascription of merit to Himself personally, as it were, in independence of God ; as a Christian saint in the like case might say "Not I, but Christ," so the Lord says virtually, "Not I, but my Father" (Rawlinson, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, p. 139). The first and second are impossible. The third is somewhat subtle. The fourth seems a just interpretation.

B. Notes

Verse 17. *eternal life* : the best and highest life, the life in God.

Verse 19. these commands are all from the second table of the Law, to emphasize the supremacy of the ethical (so Bruce).

Verse 20. said in all sincerity. Many people could say the same. There is no self-righteousness here.

Verse 21. *one thing thou lackest.* Not as a kind of top-dressing to his perfection. He lacked the main thing, the single mind.

C. *The Lesson*

Introduction. Remember the last lesson, and Jesus' words, "Come unto Me." But is that easy? The evangelist proceeds at once to give us an example of how difficult it is. It always needs complete earnestness. This is seen in this story.

1. *Describe the young man.* Rich, good position (a ruler). High character. Courage (going openly to Jesus; even Nicodemus went by night). Very much in earnest. Above all, "Jesus looking upon him, loved him." Matthew Henry calls him a "hopeful young gentleman."

2. *What he wanted.* He came running eagerly to Jesus. He wanted to know how he could get the finest and best kind of life. We all want that.

3. *Jesus' answer.* "Well," said Jesus, "of course the best life is the one in which God is, and the way to get it is to do His will. You find His will in the commandments." "Yes," said the young man, "but I have kept them all, and I am not happy." Was he in earnest? Yes, he had lived a good, honest, pure life and yet he had not got the best life. What was wrong? He came to Jesus to find this out.

4. *Jesus' great test.* Jesus knew what was wrong, and He took His own way to show this to the young man. "Sell all you have," He said, "and come and

follow Me." You see this was a test. Jesus got through his guard and got home to his weak point. Did he really want the best life *above everything*? more, for example, than money? Jesus knew there was something dearer to him than the best life, his possessions. And that is why Jesus said, "Give them up, and follow Me, and you will find the best life." Jesus did not mean that everybody should do this. It was the way for *this man* because money was his dearest possession; dearer than God or truth. So Jesus saw that the way for *him* was to give up everything. What Jesus says here is put by a great scholar thus: "Strip yourself of every possession . . . be as if you were a naked soul, alone in the world; be a man merely, and then be God's" (A. B. Davidson).

5. So Jesus shows *how hard real religion is*. It is preferring God to everything in the world. You need the single mind, a mind bent on a single thing. Religion means giving up anything that competes with Christ for your heart.

6. But this is the secret, not only of religion but of all that is great. Look at the great explorers (Livingstone, Scott, Cook), the great inventors (Palissy, who broke up his very table and chairs to keep the fire for his experiments burning), the great saints (Abraham, who was ready to sacrifice his beloved son; Paul, who gave up position, honour, money for Christ; Peter, who died for Him; Ridley and the martyrs). Tell the story of St. Antony or St. Francis, who were both inspired and guided by the words of Jesus here.

7. There are many things which may keep us from knowing the joy and blessing of the "best life." The one Jesus deals with here is money. It was money

that sent this young man away from Jesus. And Jesus says a great deal here and elsewhere about the danger of money. Why? Because our whole life is apt to be set on comfort and earthly things. Tell of the bird gorging itself on a sheep on an ice floe. When it tried to fly away it found its feet frozen in the ice. This is apt to happen to us. Our soul is apt to "cleave to the dust." Describe a famous man of this kind, Marlborough, and contrast with him Charrington, heir to a London brewery worth a million and a quarter pounds. Once when he was doing mission work in the East End he saw a tragic scene of misery due to drink outside one of his own public-houses. The result was that he renounced all share in the brewery and its wealth.

8. We all have to make the *Great Choice* in one way or another. Miss Stoddart tells a lovely story (in *The New Testament in Life and Literature*) about an old "sister" in a nunnery who, when all the nuns gave up their private possessions, insisted on keeping her little garden which was her idol. But at last by a kind of miracle of grace she was able to give it up, and sent the key of the garden in a letter. It was the key of her heart. That is the meaning of this story. The Lord must have the key of our hearts. A test comes to us all. Is this, or this, or this, more to us than Jesus Christ?

Expression Work. 1. Who are the three men whom Jesus is said in the Gospels to have loved? 2. Where does Jesus speak of the peril of money? 3. What other things may be a similar danger?

XXXII. ZACCHÆUS

THE SEEKING SAVIOUR

ST. LUKE 19¹⁻¹⁰

A. For the Teacher

1. "Publicans" were not so much tax-collectors as customs officers. They imposed a levy on the produce of a district, and in Jericho this would be large because of the large revenue from the balsam trade and the traffic from the east to the west side of the Jordan. The office of customs collector was open to grave abuse owing to the system adopted. The office was put up to auction, and the successful bidder paid the Government (in Judæa the Roman Governor, in Galilee Herod) a certain sum. Thereafter he was free to squeeze as much out of the people as he could get. And there was naturally a great deal of oppression and robbery. But there was an additional reason for the publican's unpopularity. He was a servant of the hated Roman oppressor, and if (as generally) he was a Jew, he was regarded as a traitor to his race. There was a third reason, however. The publican had to take an oath to the Emperor to whom sacrifice was offered in the temples. "Thus the acceptance of the tax-gatherer's office became a religious offence" (Hastings). It was associated with harlots and sinners in the Jewish speech. These men were therefore driven out of respectable society, and a promise made to them was declared to be no more binding than one made to a criminal (Hastings). Their evidence was not accepted in a court of law, and they were ostracized by the stricter Jews. All this shows how lonely and forlorn a life even

a rich man like Zacchæus would live if he were a publican. It is important to emphasize this.

2. Zacchæus was one of the "lost" referred to by Jesus. This term has been given a theological meaning quite foreign to Jesus' mind. The real meaning of the word as Jesus used it is seen in St. Luke 15, in the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. The lost were those who, whether by their own fault or not, were living without God, without usefulness. They were "lost to God," and to man also. Here the term describes chiefly the social ostracism of Zacchæus. He was a social leper, a lost soul because he did not know the joy of being God's son or of living in His service.

3. The story of Zacchæus may be told from two points of view. From that of Zacchæus it is the story of the seeker after Jesus. From the other side it is the story of Jesus seeking the lost. The former makes a fascinating lesson (the curiosity about Jesus—the obstacle to its satisfaction—the way in which Zacchæus rose superior to this obstacle—the finding). But the latter is obviously the lesson intended by St. Luke, and made quite certain by the words of Jesus in verse 10. It is therefore the point of view in this sketch. But the other truth is also worked in.

B. Notes

Verse 2. name, occupation and social standing of Zacchæus. He was the "chief publican," i.e. overseer of the local customs officers.

Verse 3. *sought*: literally "was trying"; foiled first by the denseness of the crowd, and then by his own little stature.

Verse 4. *sycamore tree*: the fig mulberry, common in the Jordan valley (where Jericho lay) and in the lower, hot districts. Its branches are low, thick and wide-spreading, and therefore inviting to climbers.

Verse 5. in a friendly tone. How did Jesus know his name? He probably saw him in the tree, and asked who he was. Here was an opportunity of reaching one of the outcasts!

Verse 7. general murmurs. Note the courage of Jesus.

Verse 8. *I give*. Does this mean, "I give as a custom," or "In the future I will give"? Ruskin says the former and that Zacchæus was a good man. The latter is more probable.

Verse 9. *Son of Abraham*. A Jew, and therefore not an outcast. And also a *man*, says Jesus (Bruce).

C. The Lesson

Introduction. Did you ever notice that the finest things said about Jesus were said by His enemies—"He saved others, Himself He cannot save," "this man receiveth sinners," and here, "He is gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner." These words were all said in reproach. Jesus sought friends among those who were looked down upon and despised. We call them "outcasts." Explain the word. See here again (as so often) the courage of Jesus. This story gives us an example of how Jesus sought and saved those who were shunned by others.

1. *The Outcast.* A publican. What this was. Why hated. Rich, yet shut out of decent society. Yet there is good in the worst, as Jesus often found. A soldier in the war wrote that if ever he had the chance he would

show men as he had seen them out in France, “ animals capable of animal lusts, who have angels living in their hearts.” Tolstoi tells of a visit to a lodging-house in Moscow. It was a terrible place where the lowest of the low went. He had spoken a word of kindness to one of the inmates, and he says that one woman’s head after another appeared above the partition gazing at him with eagerness. They seemed as if they had been waiting for it. What was the good in Zacchæus ? (1) Curiosity about Jesus. How much our curiosity reveals about us. What are we curious about ? He wanted to see Jesus. That was already a great deal. (2) Determination not to miss Him. Nothing could prevent him seeing Jesus ! He got above all the obstacles. That is also something good. The really notable thing about Zacchæus was that he was bent on coming face to face with Jesus.

2. *The Saviour.* Now comes the story. We see (1) Zacchæus in the tree. Jesus sees him and asks, “ Who is that ? ” A noted publican ! Here is a great chance to save a lonely, despised man. Jesus’ words to Zacchæus. Note specially their kindly tone. The surprise of Zacchæus ! The murmurs of the crowd : “ going to be a guest with this notorious sinner,” shocking ! Jesus brushes all this aside. Goes to the house of this hated and despised man. (2) The effect on Zacchæus. A changed man. Completely changed by what ? By kindness. The power of kindness. The new Zacchæus, just, generous. (3) The cause of all this—“ The Son of Man is come to seek and save the lost.” Explain this. Who the “ lost ” are. Jesus came first to seek and then to save them. One of the greatest words in the Bible. It means that in our life there is a great love seeking us and never letting us go.

The pursuing love of the Redeemer. For the older pupils use Francis Thompson's "Hound of Heaven," at least in description. A great truth for all who are "lost," who are despised, who have done wrong, who are thought little of. The great love of God seeks us and never lets us go.

3. *The Salvation.* Jesus found this man and made him a *new man*. He had been greedy; he was now generous. He had been unjust and oppressive; he was now just. Jesus had even cured him of his love of money! The "salvation" Jesus gives is one that touches everything in us. It is not a matter of words but of character, of what we are. There is no real salvation that does not make a boy or girl new and different. It is not real unless it changes us. "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." That is what "save" means.

Expression Work. 1. Draw Zacchæus in the tree and Jesus looking up at him. 2. Give examples of the "lost" in the true sense from the Gospels. 3. Where was Jericho? and what is said of it elsewhere in the Bible?

XXXIII. THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

JESUS THE KING

ST. MARK 11¹⁻¹¹

A. *For the Teacher*

1. The account of St. Mark is followed in this lesson. It is clearly the original. Peter (who is the authority behind Mark's Gospel) was probably one of the two

disciples sent for the colt. Matthew expands Mark's account.

2. Jesus apparently made all the preparations for this dramatic event. It was carefully and deliberately designed. The colt itself had been arranged for. The event is a pictorial and dramatic statement of a truth, the assertion by Jesus of His Messiahship. He had always enjoined silence about anything like this. He had concealed His real claim until two things were secured. One was the revelation of His own aims, His own Gospel and His own person. The other was the assurance of His apostles' loyalty. Both these things had now happened. The Lord knew He would be put to death. But it was necessary first to make an open statement of the truth about Himself, that He was God's Son and Servant, the fulfilment of the hopes of all the ages. And He made this proclamation clearly when He rode into Jerusalem on an ass. He chose this way partly because of the prophecy in Zechariah 9^o, and partly because He loved to say things in a dramatic and pictorial manner. Therefore Jesus finally and beyond all doubt asserted His Kingship before all the world. And has not this dramatic scene stamped on men's minds far more clearly than any words could do the real nature of His Kingship and His Kingdom?

3. The teacher must get the route of the procession clearly in his own mind and set it before the eyes of the children. If he has not a map of Jerusalem he can draw the route on the blackboard. It is very clear. Jesus had come to Bethany, which is about 2 miles from Jerusalem. From Bethany two roads run to Jerusalem. One goes over the Mount of Olives, the other winds round the southern shoulder of the mount, and then

turns northward until it comes opposite the Shepherd's Gate of the city. There is a fine description of this southern route in Stanley's *Sinai and Palestine*, and most writers think this was the road Jesus used.

Bethphage has not been identified. It was possibly the village in which the colt was found, and it lay between Bethany and Jerusalem. It must be understood that the crowd accompanying Jesus from Bethany included many Galilean pilgrims to the Passover feast, and that they were met by a crowd out of the city who had heard of the presence of Jesus at Bethany (⁹).

B. Notes

Verse 1. Bethphage means "house of figs," and Bethany "house of dates." Dates and figs grew plentifully on the slopes of Olivet.

Verse 2. *whereon no man ever yet sat.* Cf. Numbers 19²; Deuteronomy 21³; and 1 Samuel 6⁷.

Verse 3. *The Lord*: better "the Master."
send him hither: rather "He (Jesus) will send him back at once."

Verse 4. *in a place where two ways met.* The R.V. has "in the open street."

Verse 8. *garments.* Cf. 2 Kings 9¹³, a significant parallel.
branches: R.V. has "branches which they had cut from the fields."

Verse 9. Jesus in the midst of the procession which was formed by two crowds.

Hosanna: literally a prayer from Psalm 118²⁵, "save now," but may be used here as equivalent to "Vivat!" or "Hail!"

Blessed is he, etc.: also from Psalm 118²⁶, a psalm used at the Passover and therefore familiar to the people.

Verse 11. Jesus looked round and saw what was going on—this is to prepare us for the cleansing of the temple next day.

C. *The Lesson*

Introduction. If the class is English the teacher might begin by asking why Palm Sunday got its name and what Sunday it is; if Scottish, I am afraid he could not count on the children knowing what Palm Sunday is. A safe beginning would be some question about the coronation of our King, and especially about the procession to the Abbey. This was all the coronation our Lord got on earth, and this was His coronation procession.

1. Point out that it was all carefully planned by Jesus Himself. He had been steadily drawing nearer and nearer to Jerusalem, knowing well what His fate would be there. But it was necessary for Him to show Himself as God's Son and our King in the chief city of the Jews. Hitherto He had always concealed this truth about Himself. But now at last it had to be made clear to all. He could now declare Himself the promised Messiah, since every one knew what He was like and since His closest followers had proved themselves faithful. He was now going to make His final appeal to His own people. He was going to offer Himself to them as their Saviour. And so He made these arrangements so that all the world should know that He bore God's message to them.

2. *The Course of Events.* First explain the route with the help of a map or a blackboard sketch. Then tell the story in three scenes. (1) *At Bethany.* Here the preparations were made. His presence was noised

abroad, and many Galilean pilgrims who had seen His wonderful works gathered behind Him as He started. The colt procured and the procession formed. (2) *On the way.* The crowd from Jerusalem meets the crowd from Bethany. The homage of the people. Garments and leaves strewn on the road. There are some interesting parallels to this. Look up 2 Kings 9¹³ for one. Then, we read that during the war between Turkey and Egypt in 1836 when the people of Bethlehem sought the protection of the British Consul they spread their garments in the way of his horses to do him honour (Stock). And, of course, there is Sir Walter Raleigh and Queen Elizabeth. This homage and the shouts of "Hosanna!" from the Passover Psalm accompanied Jesus all the way. (3) *The arrival at the Temple,* where Jesus looked round, and then quietly made His way back to Bethany, His purpose accomplished.

3. *Jesus the King.* That is the truth of this story. There never has been a king in this world like Jesus in any way. None has had so vast a kingdom. None has had such a kingdom in the hearts and lives of men. None has been a king ruling only by love. None has had such loyalty and obedience. Describe the devotion of the Jacobites to the Stuart kings. But in a far greater way, Christians are, or ought to be, "Jacobites for Christ." And, besides all that there is this, that only as Christ reigns in the world will peace and happiness come to it. The only hope of the world is that "Jesus shall reign." Look at these people strewing garments in the way of Jesus. That meant "Thou art our King," and "Hosanna" meant that. Do we give Jesus this homage? or, better, the homage of our hearts and lives, our love and obedience?

A missionary in Central China told how he had been

made a missionary by this story. He doubted his fitness, but when he read of the ass that Jesus found useful, of which it was said "the Lord hath need of him," he thought even he might be of some use, and then he said : " I have been enabled, ass or no, to carry Jesus now for ten years into the far heart of China . . . and am content and happy to be but a beast of burden so long as I carry the Master " (Stoddart, *The New Testament in Life and Literature*). That is as good a comment on this incident as I could imagine.

Expression Work. 1. Look up the passages where Jesus forbids people to make Him known, and show why Jesus changed this intention. 2. Draw a picture of the route Jesus followed. 3. Read, and if possible learn, the famous Palm Sunday hymn, " All glory, laud and honour."

XXXIV. THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

RIGHTEOUS ANGER

ST. MARK 11¹⁵⁻¹⁹

A. *For the Teacher*

1. St. John puts the cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of the ministry (John 2^{13ff.}), the synoptics at the end. This raises two questions : were there two purgings ? and, if not, where are we to put the incident ? It is extremely unlikely that the incident occurred twice. And this is rendered even more improbable by a fact which seems to answer both the questions referred to. This fact is the Lord's consistent concealment of His Messiahship up till now. He would not allow His

disciples to publish this fact even after the confession of Peter. But the cleansing of the Temple was an assertion of His Messiahship. It is therefore unlikely to have occurred at the outset of our Lord's ministry. This would mean that there was only one purging, and that it occurred (where it is naturally in place) immediately after the open claim to Messiahship made by the entry into Jerusalem (last lesson). In any case the main fact for us is that there *was* a cleansing of the Temple.

2. What was it that roused the anger of Jesus ? Professor J. A. Findlay says the Lord's action was part of a campaign against the Temple and its sacrificial system (*Jesus in the First Gospel*, pp. 216, 217). Bruce thinks it was the whole confusion of the "Holy Fair" within the Temple. There seem to be no grounds for the former opinion, and Bruce's explanation is only partially true. We are put on the right track by our Lord's use of the word "Robbers." The facts about the Temple traffic are as follows. First about the money changers. A Temple due was exacted from all Jews. It amounted to about one shilling and twopence. But this could only be paid in Jewish shekels and half-shekels, because foreign coinage was debased by having images on it. There were thousands of people at the Passover who had nothing but this debased coinage, and these had to have their money exchanged for the pure coin. This was done by money-changers at a large profit. The Temple priesthood connived at this, because of the money it brought in. But the scandal connected with the sacrificial animals was greater. The animals for sacrifice had to be bought at the Temple market, and they were sold at an exorbitant rate. The poor were fleeced that the priesthood might be enriched. We can see the reason why the market

invaded the Temple outer court. It is probable that a system of rapacious dealing existed within the Temple, either conducted by the priesthood or used by them. It is estimated that the revenue from this sale of animals amounted to £75,000. And we can understand that the real reason why Jesus was so bitterly pursued at the end by the Sadducees (who had earlier shown no hostility to Him) was the threat to their financial interests given in this action. It was therefore anger at the rapacious oppression of the poor which moved Jesus to this violent act. No doubt His indignation was also aroused by the profanation of God's House through this traffic. The outer court was meant for the Gentiles, for prayer and worship. How could they pray in such a din and amid such surroundings ? And how could the Temple be kept sacred if it were used as a short cut by busy passengers ? (Mark 11¹⁶). But behind the Lord's action we are to see chiefly His defence of the weak and oppressed, and His hatred of wicked and cruel profiteers (a good chapter on this incident in Dawson's *The Man Christ Jesus*. See also Budden and Hastings, *Local Colour of Bible*, III, pp. 114, 115).

3. The teacher should make up his mind whether his lesson is to be on reverence (from the Lord's resentment against such a traffic in God's House), or the righteousness of anger against oppression of the poor and against wrong generally. The latter is pursued here, because it is the real meaning of the incident. But the teacher must choose clearly and definitely, and teach the whole lesson with his aim in mind.

4. There is an interesting point that may be raised in the lesson. The Sermon on the Mount, interpreted

literally, is often quoted by pacifists and followers of Tolstoi as forbidding the use of all force. How about the cleansing of the Temple? According to John Jesus actually used a scourge. According to Mark He overturned the tables of the money-changers. This shows that the use of force is justifiable in the defence of the weak. That is to say, it justifies war on certain conditions. It shows us how to interpret our Lord's paradoxical sayings, which are often just principles stated in an extreme and paradoxical form.

5. Another point of interest is the light this incident throws on the personality of our Lord. The conventional picture of Jesus cannot be right. It is too effeminate. The Lord was not weak. He was not only meek and gentle. Mark mentions His flashing glance of anger which cowed people. And look at Him scourging the people out of the Temple! I would go so far as to ask teachers not to exhibit pictures of Jesus of the traditional weak type. They misrepresent Jesus. Get a copy of Titian's "Tribute Money" and hang that in your schoolroom. That is the real Jesus.

B. Notes

Verse 15. *into the Temple*: i.e. the forecourt, the court of the Gentiles.

doves. See Leviticus 12⁸; 15⁴; Luke 2^{22ff.}

money-changers. See under A.

Verse 16. i.e. people used the Temple as a short cut!

Verse 17. Two Old Testament quotations: the first ("my house," etc.) from Isaiah 56⁷: the second ("ye have made," etc.) from Jeremiah 7¹¹.

taught: i.e. began to teach, a discourse based on the two passages from the prophets.

thieves : better “ robbers ” or “ brigands.”

called of all nations : wrong. R.V. has “ a house of prayer for all nations.” This was what the Temple was to be.

Verse 18. *scribes and chief priests*—whose financial interests were involved.

Verse 19. Jesus stayed every night at Bethany.

C. *The Lesson*

1. You remember that after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem our Lord looked round in the Temple and then left. What did He see there ? Describe the scene, the great court with its fine colonnades, open to the sky, crowded with tables of money-changers and the stalls of cattle for sacrifice ; the din of the traffic ; the chaffering of the buyers and sellers ; the sounds of the crowd ; the smell of the animals ; the dense throng of people. Then show how behind all this traffic was a cruel oppression of the weak and defenceless people, who had come from all quarters to worship God and found themselves fleeced by the greedy merchants and priests. They *had* to buy in the Temple market because the priest could declare any animal they brought unfit for sacrifice (because of some blemish) if they did not. They *had* to change their foreign money with its images of gods and rulers for pure Jewish money. And for all this they were made to pay scandalously. Jesus calls the Temple court a den of robbers, a “ brigands’ den.” Illustrate this by two close parallels : (1) the way the poor pilgrims to Mecca were robbed by the people of Mecca (many pilgrims to Mecca practically save up all their lives to go, and are cruelly fleeced in the process) ; (2) the scandalous sale of indulgences which led to the Reformation. It was not only this,

however, but also the irreverence of such things in the house of God that roused the Lord's anger.

2. *The fierce anger of Jesus.* Was He ever angry before? Yes, often. Give examples. (Mark 3⁵; Matt. 18⁶; Matt. 23, whole chapter.) What He did now. Overturned the tables. Scourged the people out of the Temple (John). Also His severe words (den of robbers). What right had Jesus to do this? The right of Messiah, God's Son; not to speak of the right of every true man to defend the weak. Notice two things about the conduct of Jesus here. He was fiercely angry, and He used violence. Now, if you think over all that Jesus was and said and did, you will see that (1) Jesus was never angry at what was done to Himself ("Father, forgive them"); (2) His anger was always aroused by acts that hurt the weak. His anger was "the other side of His love." He was ready to wither with His scorn and to chastise with force those who oppressed the poor or the defenceless.

3. *When is it right for us to be angry?* Notice that our anger is often wrong. It is temper or rage or sullenness or revenge. All anger is wrong that is selfish, or bitter or vengeful. But anger at the wrongs of others, anger at people who oppress the weak, anger at those who make money out of the sufferings of others, is righteous. And it is right to use force in defence of the weak.

4. Examples. (1) In national affairs. Britain's action in going to war on behalf of Belgium in 1914; the Covenanters in Scotland; Cromwell's resistance to the Stuart tyranny; the Netherlands' resistance to the tyranny of Spain. (2) In our own private life defending a weak boy against a bully; defending a weak old

woman against the cruelty of boys who are tormenting her. The children will give other examples. (3) Anger at the social evils of our day and those who profit by them.

Expression Work. 1. Draw a plan of the Temple, showing the Court of the Gentiles. 2. How do you reconcile the words of Jesus in Matthew 5³⁹, about not resisting evil, and turning the other cheek, with His action here ?

XXXV. THE LORD'S SUPPER HOW CHRIST IS PRESENT

ST. MARK 14¹²⁻²⁶; 1 CORINTHIANS 11²³⁻³⁴

A. For the Teacher

1. There are several questions in connection with this event which have been (and are) hotly debated, but are of very little intrinsic importance. One is whether the Lord's Supper was observed in close connection with the Passover or independent of it. Another is whether John or the Synoptics is or are right about the date of the Passion events. Of such questions Bruce says, with admirable sense, "The discussions are irksome, and their results uncertain ; and they are apt to take the attention off far more important matters ; the essentials of the moving tale, common to all the Evangelists. We must be content to remain in doubt as to many points."

2. *Did Jesus institute the Lord's Supper as a permanent institution?* That is a question of vital importance. In Matthew and Mark there is no injunction

to go on observing the Supper. In Luke the words "do this in remembrance of Me" are supposed to have been added from 1 Corinthians 11²⁴, though that is very doubtful. The six words are found in nearly all Greek codices. These, however, are very inadequate grounds for questioning the authority of our Lord behind the sacrament. For (1) Paul's account in 1 Corinthians is much earlier than any of the Gospels, and he explicitly says he has the authority of Christ Himself for his account of the Supper. It came to him with the Lord's imprimatur (1 Cor. 11²³). It is one of the few events of our Lord's life of which he gives us a detailed account. There ought to be no question of its reliability. (2) The observance of this sacrament in the early Church from the beginning is hardly conceivable without the authority of Christ behind it. (3) The words used in Matthew and Mark are probably the words used by the minister in dispensing the sacrament, and there was no need at that time to include the command to perpetuate the ordinance.

3. The Synoptic Gospels tell us definitely and clearly that the Lord's Supper was instituted at the close of the Passover Supper, or at least in close connection with it. This was the great Feast of the Jews, and celebrated the deliverance from Egypt which was the birth hour of the nation as a nation. It was the greatest event in their history, and was commemorated with great rejoicing by great crowds of worshippers. See for the traditional origin of the feast Exodus 12⁸⁻¹¹ (Consult *How to Teach the Old Testament*, XVI). It is not necessary to describe the feast of the Passover in its details. It is sufficient to explain what it was, and that now this feast was supplanted by another with a far deeper and richer meaning, a feast commemorating

a redemption also, but a far greater redemption through the Cross of Christ.

4. It is almost humiliating to have to explain that when Jesus said "this is My body" He did not mean that the bread *was* His body. How could it be when His body was there standing before them? Our Lord's pictorial method of teaching and speaking has been referred to frequently. This is an obvious instance. When He said, "I am the door," He did not mean that He was a door in the literal sense. When He said, "I am the Vine," He did not mean He was a vine. When He said "the field is the world" He meant "the field represents the world." When He said "This is My body" He meant "this represents My body." It is a tragedy to find literal minds unable to see the poetry and drama and truth in the words of Jesus.

B. Notes

St. Mark xiv. 12. *Where wilt Thou, etc.?* The disciples did not know His plans. These were kept secret because Jesus was already aware of the treachery of Judas, and it was important to keep him in ignorance of the place of meeting, so that they should be undisturbed for this last feast.

make ready. The preparations would include the provision of the Paschal lamb, the arrangement of the room, the buying of bitter herbs, unleavened bread, wine, water, etc.

Verse 13. *two.* St. Luke tells us they were Peter and John.

a man bearing a pitcher. This was unusual. It was usually a woman who went with the pitcher. The unusual feature was an agreed-upon sign to our Lord's messengers. This secret arrangement was

because of Judas. It has been guessed that the man was the father of John Mark, because we know that his house in Jerusalem was the rendezvous of the early Christians later. (Acts 12¹²).

Verse 14. *the guest-chamber*: R.V. "My guest-chamber" showing previous arrangement.

Verse 15. *upper room*. The upper room was the best in the house.

furnished: literally "strewn," i.e. with carpets and cushions. A low table also.

Verse 18. *sat*: rather "reclined."

Verses 18, 20. *He that eateth with me . . . he that dippeth with me in the dish*. Both expressions mean simply "one of my table companions." They do not definitely point to any one person.

Verse 20. *dish*: a dish containing a mixture of fruit, vinegar and spices, in which bread was dipped.

Verse 22. *blessed*. St. Luke explains "gave thanks."

Verse 24. *new testament*: "new covenant." The Jews thought of religion as an agreement between God and man, God to protect and care for man, man to obey and honour and serve God. This covenant was sealed and ratified by a sacrifice, and the blood of the victim was sprinkled on the people. Jesus says that now a "new" agreement was to be come to, sealed by *His* blood, in which God was better known to man, and man was to be God's in a new and deeper sense.

Verse 25. Note our Lord's faith in the triumph of His cause.

Verse 26. The hymn was probably that which closed the Passover feast, Psalms 115-118.

C. *The Lesson*

Introduction. Do you remember the story of Jesus at twelve years of age? He attended the great Passover feast for the first time. Since then He had been at it again. And now He came to the feast knowing well it would be His last. Describe the meaning of the feast, and the crowds attending it. Why was it kept? Jesus was going to make it a farewell meal with His disciples. And He was going to make this the beginning of a new feast at which all His followers would be present, not only then but always. The old Passover was to cease. Why? Because our Lord was beginning a new and better religion. And this feast was to be the centre of it. The Lord's Supper.

1. *The course of events.*

(1) *Preparation for the Last Supper* (¹²⁻¹⁶). Why secret? (see under A). The arrangements here involve nothing supernatural. They were to be secure from arrest until the farewell meal was over. The man with the pitcher. The upper room. Jesus had friends in Jerusalem.

(2) *The Last Supper* (¹⁷⁻²¹). How they reclined at table. The table three sides of a square, nobody reclining in the inside of the square. The feast of the Passover went on, up to a certain point, when Jesus interposed to begin the new feast.

(3) *The Lord's Supper.* Three points should be made clear to the children: (1) *Why was it instituted?* It was to keep the memory of Jesus and of what He had done, and especially of His Cross, fresh in the minds of His disciples. (2) *What is it?* It is (a) a *memorial*. Illustrate by the memorials in churches and on village greens to the men who died in the Great War. The pur-

pose of these memorials. (b) It is a *witness*. Illustrate by spire of church, which rises from the roofs of a city pointing upwards to a higher sphere, reminding us of a nobler life. So the Supper reminds us of the presence of the living Christ. "I am with you always." Christ is our Comrade in life, and the Lord's Supper tells us that as often as it is celebrated. (c) It is a *means of grace*. This implies that Christ, through the Supper and in it, makes Himself known to us and gives us His help. What do we get at the Supper? We get "a better grip of Christ," as an old Puritan says. We realize His presence with a special intimacy. It is not that we get anything *different* from what we may get at ordinary times, but we get this in a more intense degree. There is a "real presence" in the sacrament, not in the bread and wine, but in and through the faith of the disciple. In the *act* of eating and drinking the Lord comes to us and makes Himself vivid and real. That is why the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is the centre and soul of Christian worship, why all Christian experience is consecrated in this beautiful and happy service. The Lord's Supper is the most important and essential of all Christian acts of worship. (3) *For whom then is it designed?* For disciples. Not for saints. Not for the mature. Not as a profession of attainment. Not as implying clear faith or a holy life. *But*, for endeavourers, for those whose feet are in the Way, for the beginner, for the frail, as a crutch for the lame, as "a singular medicine for sick souls" (to use John Knox's celebrated words), for all who wish to know and follow Jesus Christ, for *all* of them, however feeble their faith or slender their goodness.

2. There are some things we ought to think about the Lord's Supper which are expressed in its various

names. These can only be mentioned. "The Breaking of the Bread"—its simplicity. "The Eucharist"—its joyousness, a happy feast of gratitude. "The Sacrament" (so often in Scotland)—the service of loyalty to the Great Captain (*sacramentum*, an oath taken to the colours). "Holy Communion"—a feast of fellowship. We share everything in Christ, and we share Christ with all His people. "The Lord's Supper" given by our Lord, and all that is in it, bread and wine and blessing and the duty of observing it, from Christ Himself.

Expression Work. 1. Describe a Communion service and explain all its features and acts. 2. Why is St. Paul our strongest witness for the duty of observing this sacrament? 3. What was the Passover? and what is its connection with the Lord's Supper?

XXXVI. GETHSEMANE

THE SECRET OF VICTORY

ST. MARK 14²⁶⁻⁴²

A. *For the Teacher*

1. Gethsemane was a garden on the slopes of Mount Olivet which was separated from Jerusalem by the brook Kidron. The site has not been identified, but it was probably secluded from the public paths that wound round the base of the hill, and was therefore likely some way up the hill.

2. In the narrative of Mark 14^{26ff.}, there are really two subjects, the description of the conduct and experience of Jesus and the description of those of the dis-

ciples. Mr. Oldham, in his valuable little book on the Gospel of St. Mark, takes the two in separate studies, entitling them "How the disciples passed the hours previous to the arrest" and "How Jesus passed these hours." This may be done by the teacher also. But on the whole, I have thought it better to bring out what the narrative plainly suggests, the contrast between the seriousness and steadfastness of our Lord and the weakness and failure of His followers. This is the truth of Mark's picture, and unifies the whole incident.

3. What was the experience of Jesus which is known as "The Agony in the Garden?" (the word "agony" is taken from St. Luke's account). We do not, and cannot, fully understand it, and this should be very clearly pointed out to children. There are elements in the traditional explanation, also, which I do not think children could in the least understand, e.g. the suggestion that the real burden, from which His soul recoiled, was the guilt of the world's sin He was bearing. But there are certain things we can say about it to children. (1) One is that it was not merely the pain or suffering of death that Jesus shrank from. Stephen faced that bravely, and so have hundreds of others. Our Lord's courage was proved over and over again. (2) Undoubtedly Jesus faced in Gethsemane again, in an even acuter form, the temptation of the wilderness. This, as I have pointed out before, came up again and again, and had to be fought out each time. Was this way of the Cross, after all, the divine way? Was it the only way in which His mission could be accomplished? Was He doing rightly in choosing as He had chosen? It was so different from what all others thought! This inner conflict reached its climax in Gethsemane. "The supreme battle of His life was fought in Geth-

semane. It was a spiritual battle, fought and won in prayer" (Oldham). (3) But then there were other things in this dread experience. There was the treachery of Judas, the dark problem of Jesus "suffering at the hands of those He came to save, the frightful revelation of iniquity as it gathered to destroy Him. We cannot understand the tragic experience of Gethsemane, but we can see what it cost Jesus" (Oldham).

B. Notes

Verse 26. *offended*: i.e. made to stumble.

Verse 28. Jesus never referred to His death without looking beyond it (Oldham).

Verse 30. Note the definite, precise, repeated assertion of Jesus "that *thou* (emphatic), this day, even tonight, before the cock crows twice wilt deny Me, not once but again and again."

cock-crow: the watch before daybreak. A common phrase for this point of time. It is prosaic to think of an actual cock crowing.

Verse 32. *Gethsemane*: meaning "oil-press," a favourite haunt of our Lord (John 18²).

Verse 33. Again the three intimate friends of Jesus.

The words *began to be sore amazed and to be very heavy* are variously translated. Thus the R.V. has "greatly amazed and sore troubled"; Moffatt, "began to feel appalled and agitated"; Weymouth, "full of terror and distress." Rawlinson says the word translated "greatly amazed" is a strong expression suggestive of shuddering awe, as of one conscious of being in the presence of a supernatural mystery which excites terror.

Verse 34. *sorrowful even unto death*: "sorrow which wellnigh kills" (Swete). Cf. Psalm 88³.

Verse 36. *Abba Father.* “*Abba*” is the Aramaic word for Father, so that the Aramaic and Greek words are here set side by side. Jesus probably used the former.

cup: a word often used for lot or portion. See Psalm 16⁵; 23⁵; 11⁶; 75⁸; Isaiah 51¹⁷.

Verse 37. The man who was going to die for Christ (cf. 27-31) could not keep awake an hour for Him. “*Simon*,” use of old name “ominous.”

Verse 41. *Sleep on now.* Rawlinson says this is a question, “Are you still sleeping on, then, and taking your rest?” But it is better to interpret the words in the ordinary way, “The time is now past when your wakefulness would be a help. You may sleep on now.”

It is enough: “of sleep,” says Wellhausen. But it has been discovered that the word is used often in papyri on receipt forms. It may, then, refer to Judas, “he has received” (the bribe).

Verse 42. Arise, let us be going: i.e. to meet the enemies (whose advance Jesus may have glimpsed through the trees).

C. *The Lesson*

1. After the Supper the band made their way quietly to the Garden. On the way occurred the Lord’s solemn prediction of the coming failure of His disciples. This met with a protest. Peter’s indignant boast. The point is that Jesus recognized the seriousness of the crisis, of what was before them, and the disciples did not (26-31).

2. *In the Garden.* Note the distribution of the dramatis personæ. The eight disciples left at the outskirts. The three taken by Jesus to be near Him, near

enough apparently to hear the agonized prayer that burst from Jesus. And then Jesus alone.

3. *The Agony.* This can only be indicated generally and with reverence. It must not be treated lightly, and the impression must be given of the greatest conflict of our Lord's life. Go back to the Temptation to find its meaning, and show how this conflict arose again and again in the Lord's mind, and how it came to a climax in Gethsemane. Also make it clear that it was not fear of death that was in our Lord's soul.

4. *The Victory.* How Jesus won the victory. By prayer. Spend some time in explaining each clause of this prayer. It is the most wonderful prayer in the Bible. Note these points : (1) Its keynote is the *sense of Sonship* ("Father"); (2) it rests on *faith in God's Sovereignty* ("all things are possible to Thee"); (3) it is a *prayer for God's will* as the one thing that is best and necessary, not submission only but absolute joy and peace in the will of the Father, and (4) yet the bold and definite petition that expressed His need ("let this cup pass from Me"). This is the ideal prayer. He who prays thus will always win through.

5. Now contrast with this the disciples. Their failure and sleep ! Why ? They did not understand how great and solemn was this hour. And they had been through a very trying time. See how Jesus understood this ! See His "infinitely tender understanding," as though He said, "I know you would if you could, but how tired you are !" (Findlay, *Jesus in the First Gospel*).

6. *The Secret of Victory.* What is the explanation of this contrast ? Why the disciples' failure and our Lord's victory ? It was due to the spirit in which Jesus faced His great trial, and especially to His quiet

confidence in His Father. Jesus fought His battle in Gethsemane in prayer, and that was why He was able to face the Cross with such splendid courage. We must fight our battles before we come to them. Our battle is won on our knees, by prayer, by living in God. We must have our Torres Vedras, as Wellington had, which makes us impregnable. The prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane is the secret of all victory. It is told of Stonewall Jackson that his personal servant said of him, "The General is a great man for praying. He prays all times. But when I see him get up several times in the night, and go off to pray, then I know there is going to be something, and I go right away and pack his haversac."

The whole life of Jesus might be epitomized in Tennyson's lines :

"It becomes no man to nurse despair,
But in the teeth of clenched antagonisms
To follow up the worthiest till he die."

We see that in Gethsemane, and we see there what Tennyson does not mention, the way in which any man can face the greatest difficulties and overcome them.

XXXVII. THE BETRAYAL

TREACHERY

ST. MARK 14^{1, 2; 10, 11; 17-21.} 43-50

A. For the Teacher

1. The problem of Judas has always aroused keen discussion and has presented a serious difficulty to many minds. "When Jesus chose him to be a disciple, did

He know that Judas would betray Him ? ” is the kind of question that will arise in a child’s mind. The teacher should have it in view in teaching the lesson. Attempts have frequently been made to whitewash Judas. It has been suggested that he only acted as he did in order to force our Lord’s hand and compel Him to put forth His powers. Mr. Middleton Murry in his recent life of Jesus has the amazing theory that the betrayal and arrest had all been arranged between Jesus and Judas ! There is not the slightest ground for any of these ideas. They are definitely excluded by the whole Gospel narrative in which Judas is represented as a traitor whose conduct excited only horror in the band of disciples.

2. This is a convenient place at which to explain the nature and powers of the Sanhedrim. This was the Jewish supreme Council and High Court of Justice. It consisted of the chief priests (i.e. the Sadducean element) and representatives of the Pharisaic party. The priestly section was predominant, and it is partly because no condemnation of Jesus could be had without them that the priests came into prominence in connection with our Lord’s arrest and trial. The powers of this court were limited in two ways. They had not the power of life and death. They could try a prisoner for blasphemy (as they tried Jesus and Stephen) or for any offence against their own law, but if a death sentence were involved the prisoner had to be handed over for trial to the Roman Governor. Hence the two trials of our Lord. The jurisdiction of the Sanhedrim was limited to Judæa, for it was only the chief of the local Jewish courts, but in practice its power extended much further, as we see from Paul’s commission when he was sent to Damascus. When the Gospels speak of “ chief priests

and elders " or " chief priests and scribes " the Sanhedrim is meant.

B. Notes

Verse 1. *The Feast of the Passover and the Unleavened Bread* (R.V.). This is the full name of the feast, which consisted of the Passover proper and the seven days of unleavened bread (Bruce).

Verse 43. *a multitude from the chief priests*, etc. : i.e. from the Sanhedrim. St. John implies (18³) that there were also Roman soldiers. When had Judas left the other disciples ? At the Table ? or afterwards on the way to the Garden ? or from the Garden itself ?

Verse 44. A kiss was the usual salutation of a disciple to his teacher (2 Sam. 20⁹; Prov. 27⁶).

Verse 47. *one of them*. Peter, says St. John (18¹⁰).

Verse 48. *thief*: rather "robber" or "bandit," i.e. one who would resist and flee from justice. Jesus was often in the Temple teaching and unarmed !

C. The Lesson

1. *The enemies*. (1) Describe the gradually increasing enmity against Jesus. As early as Mark 3⁶. The Pharisees were the first to suspect Jesus. Note how often in the Gospel narrative they are present, watching and criticizing. The Lord's teaching and actions were to them a scandal, especially His conduct about the Sabbath and His scornful rejection of their rules and regulations about all sorts of things. Gradually the Pharisees came to the conclusion that Jesus was a heretic and a dangerous person. Then the priests came on the scene. They had at first looked on Jesus with contempt. But it became clear that His teaching would sweep away their whole system. And when Jesus drove

out the money-changers and traders from the Temple, the priests came to see how dangerous Jesus was to them. He was interfering with their gain ! And so the priests joined with the Pharisees in opposing Jesus. (2) And the two parties agreed that He must be put to death (Mark 14¹). The Jews had a court of justice called the Sanhedrim which included both priests and Pharisees, and this court held a meeting and decided to find a way of killing Jesus. (3) But they did not care openly to arrest Jesus during the day. They were afraid that His popularity with the great number of Galilean pilgrims might bring about a rescue, or at least a tumult, and that Jesus might escape or they themselves get into trouble with the Roman authorities. And as the Romans would not arrest Jesus, and they themselves did not care to face the risk, they had to find a secret way. And the best of all secret ways was through a traitor disciple. Jesus retired every night to Bethany. If they could only arrest Him at night and in secret the whole affair might be over in twenty-four hours. And so they were delighted when Judas came to them and proposed a plan.

2. *The Traitor.* (1) However did Judas come to betray his Master ? He came to this gradually. When Jesus called him to be a disciple he was, like many other Jewish youths, an ardent patriot and in his own way a deeply religious man. He was looking for the Messiah and thought he had found Him in Jesus. Our Lord must have had great hopes of Judas when He called him, and Judas was stirred and moved by this wonderful teacher. (2) But gradually a change took place. For one thing Judas was the only Judæan in the band of disciples. All the rest were Galileans. Perhaps he felt "out of it." Perhaps he was of a jealous nature and resented

the place that Peter, James and John held in the friendship of Jesus. But above all he was disappointed in Jesus. This was not the Messiah he had pictured. He wanted a Messiah who would restore the glory of His people and be a popular leader and a military power. And more and more as he listened to Jesus he realized how far He was from Judas' hope and desire. And so Jesus "ceased to be attractive" to Judas, and became repulsive, and more and more so. His treachery was therefore the result of a long course of disappointment. And when Judas saw clearly that death was to be the end for Jesus and ruin to the hopes of His followers, he thought it was time to make sure of his own safety. It was now a case of "sauve qui peut." The Gospels hint several times that greed of money was his motive. But that cannot have been the main motive. The sum is too contemptible, and if greed was the motive his suicide later cannot be explained. The true motive is as described above "to ruin a cause he had renounced." It was not an impulsive act, but deliberate treachery.

(3) The way in which he carried out this treachery is one of the blackest parts of a black deed. His bargain with the priests (Mark 14¹⁰⁻¹¹), his revealing the plan of Jesus to go to Gethsemane, his stealing away to join the band of Temple police from the Sanhedrim, the kiss. The protest of Jesus. The scattering of the disciples' band. The arrest.

3. The conduct of Judas is the worst example in history of one of the worst of all sins, treachery. Dante, in his great poem, the *Inferno*, which is a picture of Hell as he saw it, puts the traitors at the lowest depth of Hell, nearest Satan and furthest from God. He has special places for traitors to kindred and friends, among whom are Cain, and Absalom, and Mordred, the

treacherous son of King Arthur (tell this story). There is another place for traitors to their country, among these being Antenor the Trojan who betrayed Troy to the Greeks, and suggested the making of the Wooden Horse and the reception of it into Troy, and Ganelon, whose name in the Middle Ages was a byword for treachery. He betrayed Charlemagne to a Saracen prince and his treachery cost the life of the famous Roland. And finally, at the lowest depth of Hell, frozen into the ice and champed in the jaws of Satan are Judas, Brutus and Cassius, who betrayed their lords. The story of the betrayal of Cæsar is known to the children.

4. Contrast with these names those of faithful friends and servants, Damon and Pythias, Jonathan, Martyrs like Ridley and Latimer. Why is treachery so foul a sin ? and what is it ? It is to be false to our trust, false to our friends, false to our country, false to our honour and conscience. A traitor, one who is false to any trust, is the lowest and basest of men. Show how the highest thing you can say of anyone is that you can *trust him*, and the worst thing, that he *cannot be trusted*. One of the greatest words in our language is Honour. This is what keeps men straight, honour towards man and towards God, honour in work, in friendship, in religion. To be true to those who trust us is the greatest thing in the world. Above all, to be true to Jesus Christ.

Expression Work. 1. How was the conduct of Cassius like that of Judas ? 2. Judas Iscariot means “Judas the man of Kerioth.” Where is Kerioth ? and what influence had his birthplace on his treachery ? 3. Who were present among the crowd that came to arrest Jesus ? (read Mark 14⁴³⁻⁵⁰ and John 18¹⁻¹²).

XXXVIII. PETER'S DENIAL

WEAKNESS

ST. MARK 14^{54, 66-72}

A. For the Teacher

1. The difference between Judas and Peter is the difference between treachery and instability, and the importance of this lesson for children is just that so many of their faults, and so much of their wrongdoing are due to carelessness and weakness more than to wickedness. Peter was a true disciple, yet he broke down—that is the value of this incident for children. And for that reason it is necessary to round off the lesson by showing that Peter recovered himself, and how this was done. That is why in this case we go beyond the actual incident.

2. Peter was recognized in the crowd by his Galilean speech. Probably by his northern accent, as we could recognize an Aberdonian or a native of Glasgow or of Lancashire. But also by his Galilean idiom. The northerners could not pronounce the gutturals properly, and had a habit of using “t” for “s” (Stock).

3. It is essential to show clearly the scene of Peter's denial. The High Priest's Palace was built round a courtyard, somewhat as a modern University is built round a quadrangle, only the rooms looking on to the courtyard were open so that what was going on in the courtyard could be seen from them. The trial of Jesus was going on in an *upper* chamber (Mark 14⁶⁶, “*Beneath*”), so that Jesus might see the crowd round the

fire though they could not see into the trial chamber. There was a passage from the courtyard to the gate, like the passage into a university quadrangle, and this was the "porch" of verse 68. The nights in the East, especially so high up as Jerusalem (2,000 feet above the sea), are chilly, and a fire was burning in the courtyard. Draw the outline as given above on the blackboard.

B. Notes

Verse 54. *palace* : rather "court," R.V. See under A.

Verse 66. *beneath* : implying that Jesus was tried in an upper hall or room.

one of the maids, awake and on duty so late, knowing that something extraordinary was on foot.

Verse 67. *looked upon Him*, rather "looked fixedly at him."

Thou also, etc. : rather, "thou also wast with the Nazarene, that Jesus," contemptuously.

Verse 68. The words show how embarrassed Peter was. They may be rendered : "I do not understand you. What do you mean ?" the kind of thing a guilty man always says !

porch : the vestibule or passage between the courtyard and the outer gate.

Verse 69. *a maid* : rather "the maid," the same maid ; Matt. 26⁷¹ says it was "another maid."

Verse 70. *a Galilean*. See under A.

Verse 71. *to curse* : i.e. to invoke curses on himself if he were not telling the truth.

Verse 72. *When he thought thereon*, a very unusual word. Much discussion of its meaning, either this translation or "he covered his head and wept."

C. *The Lesson*

1. Begin by sketching vividly the contrast between the brave Peter of the Garden, where he struck at Malchus with a knife, and the cowardly Peter of the courtyard. What came between was the arrest of Jesus, with the flight of all the disciples. Peter and John returned, however, and made their way into the courtyard of the palace where Jesus was being tried.

2. The courtyard. The scene. The fire lit in the open. The crowd of servants round it. Peter in the crowd. A very different Peter from him who boasted "Though all should deny You, I will not." Jesus had failed after all! All their hopes gone! This was the end! Up till the last Peter had hoped Jesus would overwhelm His enemies. But now the whole thing was a failure. Then came the sudden challenge. (1) The maid. Her fixed look at Peter. "Where have I seen him? Oh, yes, with that Jesus." Her challenge to him, and Peter's indignant denial. With a "red face" he blustered out, "I don't understand you. What do you mean?" (2) Peter slunk away after this into the passage between the courtyard and the gate, but the maid followed him, and pointed him out to the others. (This time she did not address Peter at all, verse 69.) Again Peter denied her positive assertion. (3) A little while after Peter returned to the courtyard, and stood among the crowd at the fire who were discussing the events of the day. Peter seems to have taken part in the conversation (how like him!) and his Galilean accent convicted him. Again he was challenged. This time he swore on oath that he knew nothing of Jesus, and called down curses on his head if he was telling a lie. And Peter remembered the Lord's words, and

he covered his head with his cloak and wept bitterly. St. Luke tells us an interesting fact, that just after his last denial, Jesus, who was probably being led from the trial chamber, looked at Peter. And it was this look that pierced to Peter's heart.

3. How did Peter, who loved Jesus, come to deny his Master ? Get reasons from the class. Give the class full scope here, for this is the valuable part of the lesson, and the children ought to teach themselves here. Some suggestions are as follows : (1) a boaster is always undependable. And notice, he is so because he is unprepared, he is so self-confident. And this challenge came to Peter suddenly and unexpectedly. Temptation often does. Notice the way trees lean. They lean the way the prevailing wind blows and their roots have taken a strong hold of the ground to resist it. In one of the big storms in Scotland some years ago an enormous number of trees were blown down because the gale came with terrific force from the opposite direction to the prevailing one. It was the unexpected that blew them down. (2) The influence of Peter's company. They were all against him. To them all, his faith and his Master were ridiculous. And Peter was cowed into his denial. How often this happens. We dare not stand up for right or truth against ridicule, or in presence of those who sneer at religion or at purity. We are afraid to witness for Christ or for honour or for goodness because our company is against us. (3) Peter was only half-hearted. He followed Jesus "afar off." He was not altogether for Him. He could not stay away yet he would not boldly stand by His side. This is always a source of weakness. Remember Macbeth : "would not play false yet could wrongly win." The only way to be strong and steadfast in any aim is to be altogether

for it. Look at the pioneer who gives up home and country and comfort to find some undiscovered land (Cook, Livingstone, Scott, Abraham). Nothing can keep them back from success because their whole heart is in it. It is the same with inventors. Be out and out for whatever you are.

4. This courtyard scene was *Peter's test*. It is ours. The real test of every boy or girl is just the life of everyday, in school, in the playground, in home. Watch a boy in the playground. Does he play the game ? If so, he will do it later. In school, does he tell the truth ? is he honest ? or does he cheat ? and lie ? At home, is he unselfish ? helpful ? good humoured ? Just the ordinary experiences of our daily life. And the way to pass through this test successfully is to have the *habit* of truth, of honour, of honesty.

5. *Peter's Recovery*. Peter failed and denied his Lord. But that was not the end. How Peter recovered himself. (1) By Christ's look, the look Peter met after he had denied Him. Read Mrs. Browning's wonderful sonnet on this :

" I think that look of Christ might seem to say
‘Thou Peter ! Art thou then a common stone
Which I at last must break my heart upon ?
. . . Did I yesterday
Wash thy feet, my beloved, that they should run
Quick to deny me 'neath the morning sun ?
. . . Go and manifest
A late contrition, but no bootless fear !
For when thy final need is dreariest
Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here ;
My voice to God and angels shall attest
“ Because *I know* this man, let him be clear.” ” ” ”

(2) By Christ's personal help. We learn from St. Paul (1 Cor. 15⁵) that after Christ's resurrection He met Peter

and had a private talk with him. It was then Peter was set on the right way, and his life given back to him to be lived (as we shall see) in a very different way. And it is by this act of personal forgiveness and help from Christ that we are all made able to live for Him and to serve Him.

Expression Work. 1. Draw a picture of the scene of Peter's denials. 2. Describe the three occasions on which Peter denied his Master. 3. What were the causes of Peter's failure?

XXXIX. THE TRIALS

ECCE HOMO!

ST. MARK 14⁵³⁻⁵⁶ and 15¹⁻²⁰ (WITH ST. LUKE 23⁶⁻¹² and ST. JOHN 18¹²⁻²⁴)

A. *For the Teacher*

1. This is a purely narrative lesson. It is not difficult to visualize clearly the course of events as we find them in the four Gospels. The teacher will find a particularly full account of the whole incident in Professor Stalker's *Life of Jesus*. In some respects Luke is different from Mark, and we owe to him the episode of Herod's examination. John supplies a dialogue between Pilate and Jesus. But it seems best to follow the plain straightforward narrative of the earliest Gospel, using Luke for the Herod incident, and John for the appearance before Annas. The object of the lesson is to tell the story of the trials clearly, and to exhibit the figure of Jesus in its majestic greatness.

2. Jesus was tried twice. The examinations before

Annas and Herod were not trials at all. The real trials were before the Sanhedrim (presided over by Caiaphas, the High Priest) and before the Roman Governor. The reason why Jesus was tried twice was that the Jewish court, though it was allowed to deal with local matters, had not the power of capital punishment. That was reserved to itself by the Roman Authority. And, since the priests were determined on the death of Jesus, they had to bring Him to Pilate (see Introduction).

3. The judges of our Lord are set before us with wonderful vividness. Annas was an old man, and, though not High Priest at the time, possessed a great deal of influence and a strong personality. This was the reason why he had a hand in the business. Caiaphas is depicted as a cynical advocate of the doctrine of expediency, without any real conscience of right or duty or justice. Pilate was the procurator of Judæa, appointed in A.D. 25 and holding office till about A.D. 35. He was reputed to be a harsh and tyrannical governor, and his record was dark with the stain of massacre. He is described as "inflexible, merciless and obstinate," and as having been guilty of "corruption, violence . . . and never-ending most grievous cruelty." He resided at Cæsarea, but during the Pass-over he came to Jerusalem in case of disturbance. The Herod who examined Jesus was Herod Antipas, king of Galilee, who put the Baptist to death. And our Lord's complete silence before him is the severest witness to his complete moral degradation. The scene of the ecclesiastical trial has been described in last lesson. The civil trial (before Pilate) was held either in the Castle of Antonia or in the great palace of Herod which the governor often occupied. The priests would not go into the palace for fear of being defiled (there would

be leaven in the house), and Pilate took Jesus into the building to examine Him and brought him out later to the priests again.

4. One thing ought to be brought out clearly in the lesson, the hideous injustice with which Jesus was treated. The Jewish law was extremely, almost quixotically, favourable to a prisoner. It laid down rule after rule to prevent injustice, and *all* these rules were broken by the Sanhedrim and Caiaphas. Jewish justice was like our own military court-martial, almost absurdly favourable to an accused person, and there is no fairer court in the world than a British court-martial. Dr. Abrahams raises the question whether these admirable rules were really in force so early as the time of Jesus, to which Professor Findlay replies, "In any case, the search for hostile witnesses, the browbeating of the Defendant and the condemnation by acclamation was a travesty of any kind of justice, and apologists for Judaism do not try to justify these proceedings" (*Jesus in the First Gospel*, p. 293). The point of this is that the idea that the Jewish authorities were honest if mistaken men is an absurd one. The whole trial of Jesus was marked by furious disregard of the elements of fairness.

B. Notes

Mark xiv. 53. *chief priests, elders and scribes* : a common formula for the Sanhedrim.

Verse 60. *in the midst* : arose and "came into the middle." He rose up and came into the semi-circle of the meeting, irritated and baffled (Bruce).

Chapter xv. 2. This is incomplete. Pilate's question implies the accusation of treason which St. Luke tells us was made by the Jewish authorities.

Verse 10. *he knew*: R.V. *he perceived*. “It gradually dawned on him” (Bruce).

Verse 15. *scourged*: the common preliminary to execution, a dreadful ordeal. The instrument was a whip with leather lashes loaded with lead and iron. It sometimes caused death. We can understand why Jesus was unable to carry His cross.

Verse 16. The hall called Prætorium. “Prætorium” meant originally the General’s tent, the headquarters of a camp. Later it came to mean a palace, the residence of a governor or prince. Mark’s readers would therefore understand by the word “the palace, i.e. the barracks” (Rawlinson). *band*: “cohort,” R.V., a body of troops several hundreds strong. Not necessarily a whole cohort here.

Verse 17. *purple*: a soldier’s military coat, doing duty for the “purple” of royalty.

Verse 18. *Hail, King of the Jews*: i.e. “Ave, rex Judæorun,” a parody of “Ave, Cæsar Imperator.” The “purple,” the Crown, the “Ave” all part of the jest they were enjoying.

C. *The Lesson*

Jesus arrested and carried off for trial. He was tried *twice*. Why? (see under *A*). Once by the Jewish Court of Justice, and once by the Roman Governor.

1. *The First Trial*. Three stages quite clear. (1) Before *Annas*. Why before Annas? Who he was, a former high priest and a man of great influence. Just a preliminary examination. (2) Then before a hastily gathered meeting of members of the Jewish Court, brought together in the middle of the night to try and get the whole thing over before the people knew about it. Picture the scene, the palace built round a court-

yard (see Lesson XXXVIII). Jesus tried in the upper chamber looking out on the courtyard, the members of the Court sitting round in a semi-circle with the Prisoner facing them in the centre. The incidents are clear. A hasty search for witnesses produced only men who gave no clear evidence but contradicted one another. The High Priest was annoyed and angry, and he strode out into the middle and addressed Jesus, trying to force a confession out of Him. In the end he put the blunt question : "Are you the Son of God ?" Jesus had been silent, but to this challenge He could not refuse an answer if He was to be true to Himself. He therefore answered, "I am." That was enough. The High Priest tore his garments, as was customary when blasphemy was committed, and, turning to the Court, he said, "You have heard this ? What is your verdict ?" The answer was a shout of condemnation. And then a scene that would degrade any court. Jesus was struck and spat on and insulted by members of the Court and by their servants. It is a dreadful scene.

But what we have to notice is this, that everything this Court did to Jesus was illegal, according to the laws of the Jews themselves. The examination before Annas was against the law which said that no examination of a prisoner could be held before his public trial. Again it was forbidden to try prisoners at night, also to pass sentence of death before a night had passed after the trial, also to try any criminal case on the day before a Sabbath or a feast day (and Jesus was tried on the day before the Sabbath). Further, the judges were expressly forbidden to seek out witnesses, and no prisoner could be condemned on his own confession. All these rules of Jewish law were set at defiance in the case of Jesus. He was condemned, not by honest men

who might have made a mistake, but by men who had resolved on His death and were ready to do anything, however wrong and unjust, to get Him killed.

2. *The Second Trial.* But they could not put Him to death themselves, and so they had to hand Him over to Pilate for a second trial.

At first they tried to get Pilate to condemn Jesus without making any inquiry. "If He were not a malefactor we would not have brought Him to you," they said. But Pilate was not so easy-going as that, and had to be satisfied of the prisoner's guilt. Now, it was no use bringing an accusation of blasphemy to Pilate, because that was a religious matter and he would not take any notice of that. Rome allowed all nations under her to manage their own religious affairs and would not interfere in them. And so the Jews had to bring a different kind of charge, and the one they brought was *treason* against Rome. They said Jesus claimed to be the real King of the Jews (Luke 23²). That would have been serious indeed if Pilate had believed it. But when he looked at Jesus and talked with Him, he saw that the charge was absurd and that Jesus was innocent. And he tried in any way to release Him. He did not want to offend the Jews, however, and he looked round for some way of escape. First he thought of Herod because Herod was ruler of Galilee, and some one had said that Jesus was a Galilean. And so he sent Jesus to Herod to be tried. Describe this episode (Luke 23⁶⁻¹²). This effort to wriggle out of his duty failed, because Herod sent Jesus back with the intimation that he could make nothing of Him. Then another way of escape suggested itself to Pilate. The people! Jesus was popular and it was Pilate's custom to release a prisoner at the Passover time as an act of

mercy and goodwill. If he asked the people, they would demand Jesus ! But, alas for his hope, there was a far more popular person in prison, a popular leader of a rebellion, Barabbas, and the “crowd,” *probably a crowd of supporters of Barabbas*, clamoured for him.

And so Pilate was forced to decide himself. He knew Jesus was innocent, but he delivered Him up to death. Why ? Because he was a moral coward. He had a bad record as a governor, and therefore a bad conscience. And “conscience doth make cowards of us all.” He was afraid the Jews might report him as luke-warm about such a charge as treason and that an inquiry might be made into his whole conduct. And then ensued another dreadful scene in which the Divine Prisoner was made the butt of rude and cruel soldiers (Mark 15¹⁶⁻²⁰).

3. The one thing that stands out in all these scenes of violence and injustice is the majestic greatness of our Lord. His patience. His silence. His gentleness with Pilate. His endurance. It is all wonderful. Set this in the light of the fury, the hatred, the savagery of the Jewish court—the harsh arrogant injustice of Caiaphas, the brutality of Herod and his men—the cowardly wickedness of Pilate. Set against all this the lonely Prisoner, His dignity, His blamelessness, His glorious humility. All the greatness of the life of Jesus, all the beauty of His humanity, all the love and all the strength of His nature, come to their highest here. How mean we seem to ourselves in our anger, our tempers, our resentments, our revenges when we stand in the presence of such moral splendour !

Expression Work. 1. What were the *two* charges on which our Lord was condemned ? 2. Describe the

Roman system of government which (1) made a second trial necessary, and (2) made a second charge necessary.

3. What Roman Governors of Judæa do we hear of in the New Testament ? and what prisoners appeared before them ?

XL. THE CRUCIFIXION

THE CROSS

ST. MARK 15²⁰⁻⁴⁷

A. For the Teacher

1. The Cross was to the ancient world what the gallows is to us, the instrument of the most degrading and horrible punishment. "Let it never," says Cicero, "come near the body of a Roman citizen ; nay, not even near his thoughts, or eyes, or ears." Crucifixion was reserved for criminals of the worst kind, and it was attended with all sorts of ignominy. The criminal had to carry the transom or cross piece to the place of execution and round his neck was hung a tablet with his crime on it. His clothes were the perquisite of the executioners. His hands and feet were nailed to the cross, and he was left suspended there to endure the most awful agonies of thirst and pain till (sometimes after several days) he died. "It was the custom in Jerusalem to provide some alleviation for these physical tortures by the administration of a stupefying draught, and it is said that the ladies of the city made this their special care (*Local Colour of the Bible*, III, p. 154). Jesus refused this because it would have dulled His senses.

2. The site of Calvary is uncertain. It was outside the walls of the city, and in a place where roads met, but exactly where is not known. Golgotha is the Hebrew name, meaning the place of a skull. Calvary has the same meaning (Latin "calva," a skull). It was so called either because of the use made of the place or (unlikely) because it was shaped like a skull.

3. The cry of dereliction is given in two versions by Matthew and Mark. Matthew has "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani," which is the Hebrew form; Mark has "Eloi, Eloi," which is the Aramaic form. This is another instance of the unimportance of minor discrepancies. In either case the words show that in moments of stress or emotion Jesus spoke in His native Aramaic tongue, probably indeed at all times, unless when He was speaking to foreigners like Pilate or the Syro-Phoenician woman, when He would speak Greek.

4. In this lesson the teacher should avoid two things. One is working on the emotions of the children by a too emphatic delineation of the Saviour's sufferings. This does no good and may do much harm. The horror of the ancient gallows and its sufferings should be indicated, but that is not the real significance of the Cross. Even mature minds find this a difficult problem, and children are not capable of dealing with it. An indication is given at the end of the lesson of the line which might be adopted.

B. Notes

Verse 21. The criminal did not carry the upright piece of the Cross but the headpiece. Jesus was exhausted with the terrible scourging and unable to carry His. Simon was a Jewish pilgrim in Jerusalem for the Passover and lodging in the country. His

two sons were obviously well-known Christians when Mark wrote. Was it this incident which made Simon a Christian ?

Verse 22. *Golgotha.* See under *A.*

Verse 24. The soldiers had to remain till the criminal was dead in case of a rescue. They had brought dice with them to while away the time.

Verse 25. *the third hour :* i.e. 9 a.m. But notes of time must have been vague when there were no watches. Mark divides the day of the crucifixion carefully. Jesus taken to Pilate at 6 a.m., crucified at 9 a.m. At the sixth hour (12 noon) the darkness. Jesus died at 3 p.m.

Verse 26. *The Superscription.* See under *A.* The wording of it shows that Jesus was crucified on the ground of His Messianic pretensions (Rawlinson).

Verses 29–32. Note that the taunts of the crowd were directed to Jesus Himself, those of the priests spoken to one another. Both were an echo of the accusations at the trial.

Verse 33. Darkness “symbolical,” says Rawlinson. But why not real ? A gathering of lowering clouds, a threatening day.

Verse 34. *My God, my God.* The opening words of Psalm 22. This psalm is by no means a psalm of despair. It is an attractive idea that Jesus was saying the words of this psalm to Himself, and that the cry is not one of dereliction or despair but the opening of a psalm in which He found comfort.

Verse 35. Bitter mockery based on intentional mis-understanding of the Lord’s words.

Verse 36. *Let be :* i.e. allow me.

Verse 40. *Mary Magdalene*: probably a healed demoniac.

Salome: the wife of Zebedee (Matt. 27⁵⁶)

Verses 42–47. *the burial*. The body had to be buried quickly because the Sabbath was at hand. The burial place was frequently a cave with shelves for the bodies. Palestine is just a great limestone ridge, and full of caves on that account which were used as sepulchres.

Verse 43. *counsellor*: i.e. a member of the Sanhedrim.
who was looking: at least a sympathizer with Jesus like Nicodemus.

C. *The Lesson*

There are three definite pictures presented in the narrative, and these have to be shown in turn to the pupils.

1. *On the way to Calvary* (21–22). After the trial, the procession to the Cross. The soldiers. The criminal with His cross. The weariness of Jesus owing to the terrible scourging. Simon impressed for the duty. Who he was. The crowds lining the way.

2. *At Calvary* (23–39). (a) Where? meaning of the name. The horrible sufferings of a crucified person. The stupefying draught offered to Jesus. His refusal of it. Why? The soldiers dicing for His garments. The tablet with the accusation. The two robbers one at each side. (b) The taunts (29–32). (c) Jesus dies (33–39). The darkness—a gloomy day. The seven words. Brief description of these sayings. The first was a prayer for forgiveness to His enemies! The second an act of redeeming grace to a criminal. The third a remembrance of His mother. Even in His sufferings Jesus thought of others. One saying is supposed to be a cry of despair. Was it? (see note on

verse 34). The last words were words of quiet trust in His Father. The Rent Veil. The Centurion.

3. *After Calvary.* The brave act of Joseph. The burial of Jesus. The kind of tombs in Palestine. The stone rolled to the door (a protection against wild beasts). And so the end.

4. At least it seemed the end. Was it ? The death of Jesus a seeming defeat. Really a divine victory. Jesus spoke of it as the great *service* He was giving for men. How are we to think of it ? Well, first, we are to see God in it. It shows us that God will come down to the lowest to help us, to stand beside us, to share our lot, to lift our burdens. God never deserts us, not even the worst of us ! Then, secondly, the whole secret of our Lord's life was that He made Himself one with us (His Baptism, His poverty, His healing miracles, His Cross). The Cross of Jesus is the greatest proof in the world that God loves us and will do anything and everything to win our hearts and make us His.

Expression Work. 1. Read over Psalm 22. If this psalm was in our Lord's mind on the Cross, what thoughts do you think were His at that solemn hour ? 2. Name the people who were witnesses of the Crucifixion.

XLI. THE RESURRECTION

A LIVING CHRIST

ST. MARK 16 ; 1 CORINTHIANS 15¹⁻⁸

A. For the Teacher

1. There are two ways of teaching this lesson. For younger scholars it will be wise simply to tell the story

as the teacher can piece it together from the various Gospels. I have given a pointer for this below. But for older scholars these narratives raise more questions than they answer. They contradict each other on certain points, they are difficult to fit together, but above all, they represent our Lord as doing the most amazing things, such as passing through locked doors, and vanishing suddenly as He sat at table. Further, the real question senior scholars wish to hear answered is this : how do we know that Christ is alive ? As the Resurrection is the central fact of the Christian religion, and the very soul of the New Testament faith, it is important that this question should be answered as clearly and convincingly as possible. I have therefore taught the lesson below for such senior scholars. The teacher will need little help in telling the story vividly to younger pupils, but I have indicated below the probable course of events.

2. *The Gospel narratives.* It is well known by scholars that Mark 16⁹⁻²⁰ is not the original ending of the Gospel, and is not by Mark at all. It is absent from most of the great Greek MSS., and was probably added later by another hand. Either Mark failed to finish his Gospel (improbable) or the last leaf was lost. The author of the present ending (9-20) is unknown. I have given it above as a heading, however, because it contains a summary of the narratives in the other Gospels, and points to the true succession of the events. Mark 16⁹⁻¹¹ is based on John 20¹⁴⁻¹⁸; 12-14 is based on Luke 24¹³⁻³⁵; and 15-18 on Matthew 28¹⁹. The probable order of events is as follows. The women come to the tomb (Mark 16¹⁻⁴), Mary Magdalene, runs to bring word to the disciples (John 20²), the angel appears to the women (Mark 16⁵⁻⁷), Peter and John run to the tomb (John

20³⁻¹⁰), Jesus appears to Mary (Mark 16⁹⁻¹¹, John 20¹⁴⁻¹⁸), Jesus appears to the women (Matt. 28^{9, 10}), the walk to Emmaus with Jesus (Luke 24¹³⁻³⁵), the appearance to Peter (1 Cor. 15⁵, Luke 24³⁴), the appearance to the eleven (Mark 16¹⁴, Luke 24³⁶⁻⁴³), to Thomas (John 20²⁶⁻²⁹), at the Sea of Galilee (John 21¹⁻²⁴), on a mountain in Galilee (Matt. 28¹⁶⁻²⁰).

3. The main difficulty in the Gospel stories is not their discrepancies. These are natural and welcome as evidence of independence. The real difficulty is the behaviour of our Lord's body. I can offer little help about this. It has been said (1) that the Lord's body was being gradually spiritualized (cf. the Transfiguration), and becoming therefore less and less subject to material forces ; (2) that if there is any truth in the assertions of spiritualism about the manifestations of personalities some light may come from that quarter. We know so little about the relations of mind and body that it is out of place to dogmatize. At any rate our faith in the Resurrection is not based, happily, on these stories at all, so that the difficulty is not so great as it might be.

B. Notes

St. Mark xvi. 1. The Sabbath ended at 6 p.m. on Saturday evening.

Verse 4. *exceeding great*. This is to explain why they saw it at a distance.

Verse 5. *a young man* : obviously meant to be recognized as an angel, because of his white robes.

Verse 7. *to Peter* : Why Peter ? Because of his denial ? or because he was the most important of the disciples ? The former probably.

as He said. See 14²⁸.

C. *The Lesson*

What is the great truth in the New Testament ? That Christ is alive ! Describe how this truth is behind everything, and how the whole of our religion depends on it, our faith in Christ as a Saviour and our hope for the future. Therefore it is important for us to ask : did Christ really rise from the grave ? is He alive ? How do we know ? I am going to answer these questions. I am going to show you that the proof of Christ's Resurrection is as strong as for any fact in history, as strong as it could be. I am going to call witnesses and I ask you to examine them and look carefully into their testimony.

1. *Paul.* This is our first witness. Here are the points. (1) Paul's unchallenged writings. Two letters universally acknowledged as by him, 1 Corinthians and Galatians. Let us read these two short passages from them, and you will see how strong Paul's witness is. First, 1 Corinthians 15¹⁻⁸. Now notice Paul tells us that Christ appeared to (among others) Peter and James and a company of 500 people at once. Well, how did Paul *know* ? Now turn to the second passage, Galatians 1¹³⁻¹⁹. Notice Paul is giving an account of his own religious history. He tells us that before he saw anyone, after his conversion, *he spent a fortnight with Peter and James.* It was from them he heard about their having seen Jesus alive. What would they be talking about all that fortnight ? Paul just converted to Christianity and eager to know all about Christ. Is not that a strong proof ? (2) Then go back to 1 Corinthians 15 and read verse 6. Christ appeared to a company of 500, *most of whom were alive*, Paul says, and could be appealed to. (3) Paul was converted about a

year after the crucifixion, so that his testimony is early, it is direct and it is reliable.

2. *The Rise of the Church.* One of the most powerful proofs of our Lord's Resurrection is the New Testament Church. Note these two points. (1) The utter despair of the disciples when Jesus was crucified. They all forsook Him and fled. The women went to the sepulchre to embalm the body, so little hope did they have. The two travellers to Emmaus confessed, "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." When the disciples met together "they mourned and wept." Perhaps the clearest proof of how hopeless they were is that Peter denied any connection with Christ. But (2) how is it to be accounted for that a few days afterwards these very men were full of a radiant joy and confidence? They went out to preach Christ, ready to die for their faith, because they believed that He was alive. They had seen Him! This "resurrection of Christianity" is one of the most remarkable facts in history. It is unaccountable unless some event great enough had happened to produce the confidence and joy and courage we find in these men so recently plunged in gloom and despair. It is not their testimony that is the strongest evidence they have to give. It is themselves and the change that took place in them.

3. *Facts.* There are two facts which offer strong confirmation of this evidence. (1) One is the *Lord's Day*. Why was the sacred day changed to the first? Remember these facts. The early Christians were all Jews, and to a Jew the Sabbath was the most sacred of all religious ordinances. It had been ordained by God Himself. That is why the Pharisees were so angry at Jesus "breaking the Sabbath." Yet these very Jews,

to whom the Sabbath was a divine ordinance, gave it up and appointed another day. Why? Only something as divine as God's authority could account for this. And that is the Resurrection of Christ which was to be celebrated on the first day. (2) The other fact is the *Cross*. The cross was the gallows of the ancient world. To the Jew it was accursed. In all it awakened the feeling of horror that the gallows arouses in us. Yet immediately after the Crucifixion, and ever since, it was, and has been regarded by Christians with pride. "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of my Lord," said Paul. What was it that caused the change? It was the fact that the Crucified had risen and thus glorified the Cross for all time. Only something transcendently great could have done this.

4. This is the place where *the Gospel narratives* may come in as confirmation. They represent the traditions of the appearances which have been preserved. And, though there are difficulties in them, there is one thing common to them, the fact that the disciples believed they had seen and spoken to their Lord.

5. The great fact of *Christian experience*. All through the ages believers have known in their lives the help and grace of a living Christ. This is a fact of experience as solid as an experience of the outer world. It cannot be explained away. It has *persisted* and it has been in essence *always the same*. Men have differed in their views, in their theology, in their opinions about secondary matters. But the one thing always the same for Roman Catholic and Protestant, Episcopalian and Presbyterian, Lutheran and Methodist, has been their assurance of Christ. We all sing the same hymns, though we express our opinions differently, and we have

hymns by men of all the creeds in the same hymnbook. Suppose the atmosphere round the earth had always been greyer and thicker than it is, and we had never seen the moon, scientists would have been compelled to invent the moon to explain the tides. They would have said, "There must be a body out there of such and such density to account for the tides." In the same way to account for Christian experience there must be Some One *there* great enough and living enough to explain the fact.

6. *The Importance of the belief*—for our view of Christ, for our hope of eternal life, and even for our faith in God.

Expression Work. 1. Trace as far as you can the order of events after the Resurrection of Christ. 2. What is our strongest evidence for this event and why?

XLI. THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

1. *As a History.* (1) It is clear from Acts 1¹ compared with St. Luke 1¹⁻⁴, that Acts was written as the second part of a history of the Christian religion. The words of Acts 1^{1, 2} are an accurate description of the Gospel of St. Luke, and the name of Theophilus in both shows that the writer of the two books was the same.

(2) The subject of the book is the expansion of the Christian Church under the guidance of the Spirit in the Jewish and Gentile worlds. The central idea is described by Harnack, the great New Testament scholar, as "the power of the Spirit of Jesus in the apostles, manifested most impressively in the expansion of the Gospel." In other words we are shown Christianity be-

coming a Catholic or universal religion, because the true religion, in the face of the other religions prevalent in the Roman Empire. Two things are always prominent. One is the Resurrection of Christ, which is in Acts the central truth of the Christian Gospel. The other is the power of the Holy Spirit by which the Church was everywhere victorious.

(3) *Trustworthiness.* New Testament criticism has done nothing finer in our times than its work on Luke's writings, and the general result may be described as the complete vindication of Luke as a historian. Sir W. Ramsay has a great deal of credit for this, as has Harnack. These two writers between them have shown that Luke is consistently accurate in his historical references, and that speaking generally, he belongs to the first class as a reliable historian (see Ramsay's *St. Paul the Traveller* and Harnack's *Luke the Physician*).

(4) *Sources.* Acts is divided into two parts: (a) chapters 1–15, and (b) chapters 16–28. For the latter part Luke had first-hand authority. He was the companion of Paul for a large part of this period. There are certain parts of this section in which the writer uses the first person, "we." They are part of a travel journal kept by the writer (Acts 16^{9–40}; 20^{5–28}; 21^{1–18}; 27^{1–28¹⁶}). And, of course, he had all Paul's friends, Timothy, Aquila and others, as well as Paul himself, to draw on for information. The first section, chapters 1–15, is in a different position. Luke must have got his information, partly from men like Mark, Philip, James and Silas, and partly (perhaps) from written sources. We do not know. At any rate the first part of Acts is not so vivid as the second, and it is far more general and vague.

(5) *The Ending.* Acts ends abruptly, in a surprisingly unfinished manner. Why? It seems strange that the author did not tell us the issue of Paul's trial, or what happened to him. It is supposed that he meant to write a third part of his history in which he would narrate the trial and its issue. Was this intention frustrated by death? We do not know. Dr. Ironside Still, in his excellent little primers on the Acts, contends that Acts was composed as a document to be submitted at Paul's trial, to show how innocent a creed Christianity was. If this were the real motive then Luke might very well have broken off abruptly intending to resume the narrative when the result of the trial was known.

(6) *The Date.* Two dates have been supported—A.D. 64 or A.D. 75. Both have strong reasons to be urged in their favour. So far as the use of the book is concerned, the decision is immaterial. The main facts of importance are its authorship and trustworthiness.

2. *Authorship.* It has been assumed above that St. Luke is the author, and this is now generally admitted. The reasons for this are as follows: (1) The third Gospel and the Acts are by the same writer. (2) Acts claims to be by an eyewitness (cf. the "we" sections), and "when all notices of Paul's companions at various parts of his travels are put together, the presence of Luke at these times is found to correspond with the circumstances" (Blunt). (3) The medical terms used in the Gospel and Acts are invariably scientific and technical, whereas the other gospels use popular terms; and Luke was a doctor (Col. 4¹⁴). (4) Luke was certainly the author of the travel journal in the "we" sections, and he was therefore the author of the whole book, for it is a unity. "The Book of Acts is like a

seamless cloak. You can cast lots for it, but you cannot divide it." (4) Finally, ancient tradition with one voice confirms this conclusion. As to Luke himself, we do not know much about him. He was a Greek and a physician. He joined Paul at Troas (Acts 16¹⁰), possibly called in to attend him; and from that time he was his nearly constant companion. An ancient tradition says he was a painter as well as a doctor. And it is interesting to note that most of the subjects in the great religious pictures are from his writings.

3. *The Gentile World.* In the Book of Acts Christianity leaves Palestine and launches out into the Roman world. In that world religion had faded away to superstition or thinned away to philosophy. Belief in the old gods had vanished, and, because the soul of man must have a religion of some kind, all sorts of base superstitions flourished, sorcery, fortune-telling and the like. There were only two real religions in the empire, Judaism which drew many of the finest minds to its synagogues, and the Greek "Mystery" religion, which encouraged a belief in a future life and gave some satisfaction to a soul seeking salvation. With some minds philosophy took the place of religion. Into this welter of faiths the Christian religion came with its ringing gospel of a *living Christ*, and with its gift of the Holy Spirit. And Luke shows us how Christianity presented itself to men as the one true Remedy for human need, and became a Catholic (or universal) faith.

4. *The Plan of the Book.* Luke traces the expansion of the Church, stage by stage from its starting-point in Jerusalem till it reaches Rome, the centre of the world. This is the main idea, and we can see the stages clearly, Jerusalem, Samaria, Cæsarea, Asia Minor, Greece,

Rome. In the first part (1–15) we witness the growth of the Church ; in the second (16–28) its expansion. In the first part it is the Church herself on which our attention is fixed. In the second part the hero is Paul. But in reality the Hero of the book throughout is the Holy Spirit. The “ Acts ” are not acts of the Apostles, but Acts of the Spirit in and through them.

5. The dates of the main events as they are given by Canon Blunt, are as follows. The Crucifixion A.D. 29. Paul’s Conversion A.D. 30 (or 33). Up to the first journey, A.D. 30 (or 33) to A.D. 46. The first journey 47, 48. Paul in Greece 49–52. Paul in Asia 52–55. His arrest at Jerusalem 56. At Cæsarea 56–58. Journey to Rome 59. Paul’s release 62. His execution 64.

XLIII. THE WAITING CHURCH

THE PROMISE

ACTS 1

A. For the Teacher

1. The account of the Ascension in verse 9 is not without difficulty, occasioned by the picture of Christ being taken on a cloud out of sight. The difficulty is removed if, with Blunt, we regard the “ levitation ” as an accommodation to the conception of the universe which was then common. The story may simply mean that Christ disappeared, as He had disappeared at other times, after His Resurrection. The conviction that Christ is alive rests not on this physical wonder, but on other grounds (see Lesson XLI), which assure us that

He is in heaven, because that is the only "place" where He ever was. "If Heaven is a condition of spirit, He never left it. He lived the heavenly life for a time under local conditions; He then continued to live it in freedom from such limitations." Bishop Temple writes much to the same effect in his essay on "The Faith of the Twentieth Century" in *The Future of the Church of England*, p. 35. "The natural interpretation of the Ascension is not to regard it as a removal to another place in the astronomical universe, but as an acted parable signifying His liberation from all limitations of time and space. He is with God, so that wherever and whenever we are in God's presence we are in His presence also; but that is always and everywhere. Because He is in heaven He is everywhere on earth; because He is ascended, He is here."

2. The account of the death of Judas and the election of an apostle ought to be passed over lightly, as they are quite out of the stream of Luke's narrative. The historical significance of the section is the fact that the Twelve were predominant in the Church. The spiritual significance is simply that the disciples went on doing their duty while waiting for the Spirit's bestowal. The two accounts of the death of Judas, given by Matthew 27⁵ and Luke here are quite different. They probably represent two traditions which were both current in the early Church.

3. The use made of the Old Testament by Peter in verse 20 is typical of the way the Old Testament was quoted in the early Church. The idea was that in the Old Testament God had the future always in view. And so the early Christians were accustomed to apply Old Testament prophecies indiscriminately to the life

and acts of Jesus. Peter was only speaking according to the wisdom of the time, a custom which has unfortunately survived to our day. Historical science has made such an exegesis of the Old Testament impossible for intelligent readers of the Bible.

B. Notes

Verses 1–5. Introduction.

Verse 1. *Theophilus*, called in St. Luke 1³ “most excellent” or “your excellency,” a man apparently of mark. Probably a convert.

Verse 4. *assembled with*, or “eating with” (R.V. marg.) *Promise* of the Father. See Luke 24⁴⁹, and St. John’s Gospel.

Verses 6–8. The Forty Days of Instruction.

Verse 6. The disciples sensed the prospect of a crisis, but they did not know what was going to happen.

Verse 7. There is a rebuke here to the people who are always trying to fix the true time of the Second Advent.

Verse 8. This is the grand plan of Acts. Luke is going to follow this order, Jerusalem, Judæa, Samaria, and so to the uttermost part of the earth (Rome).

Verses 9–11. The Ascension. This is the only undisputed account of the Ascension. Mark 16¹⁹ is spurious, and the words in Luke 24⁵¹, “and was carried up into heaven,” are omitted in many MSS.

Verse 11. The second coming was the main hope of the early Church.

Verses 12–14. The Waiting Church.

Verse 13. *The upper chamber.* Probably the house of Mary, mother of Mark, which was the rendezvous for the first Christians (Acts 12¹²). Possibly the scene also of the Last Supper.

Peter and James, etc. The three sections of the company mentioned were the eleven, the women, and the brothers of Christ.

Verses 15–26. Election of Matthias. The only incident told of this time of waiting. Judas' treachery much discussed. Peter's explanation of it as the fulfilment of prophecies in Psalm 69²⁵ (his death), and Psalm 109⁸ (election of his successor). Verses 18, 19 are not (as R.V. has it) an interpolation by Luke but a very necessary part of Peter's argument.

Verse 22. The Resurrection was the centre of all apostolic preaching.

Verse 26. *gave lots.* This was the last time the lot was used. It was unnecessary when the Holy Spirit was given for guidance.

C. *The Lesson*

We begin now a new stage in the story told by the New Testament. Hitherto we have watched Jesus in Palestine fulfilling His ministry. Now the story carries us away beyond Palestine out into the great world. The earthly ministry of Jesus was finished, and the Gospel was ready to be carried to the whole world for which it was meant. And what we see in Acts 1 is the beginning of the preparation of those who were to carry the message.

1. *The Task given to His Followers by Christ.* Read Luke 24^{47, 48} and Acts 1⁸. The main task of the teacher here is to stimulate the imagination of the pupils so that

they will realize the tremendous audacity of this adventure to which the disciples were committed. Picture the might of Rome, the size of the empire, Roman power, the famous philosophers, the emperors, the court, an empire like Britain. Then picture the disciples, their poverty, their insignificance, their numbers (120 here !), their lack of rank, or learning, or money. Did ever anyone hear of such an absurd undertaking as for *these* men to go out to conquer this great world for their crucified Master ? Quote some parallels, like Livingstone attacking the darkness of Africa, the Covenanters resisting the Stuart kings, Columbus setting out to discover America. Show how infinitely greater and more impossible the enterprise of the disciples was. Impress all this on the minds of the class, the incredible boldness of this undertaking.

2. *The Promise* (Luke 24⁴⁹, Acts 1^{4, 5, 8}). Now ask what made these men *attempt* this impossible thing ? (1) They knew they were right, that Jesus was the Saviour of the world. They were *sure*. They had seen the Lord. And men who *know* they have the truth in them know that God is on their side. (2) Christ had given them the task. It was theirs to obey. No question possible. Soldier and Commander. Was Christ their Commander ? There was no option. *He* would see them through. It could not be impossible if He ordered it. Implicit confidence in Christ. (3) The Promise of the Power for the task (read the above passages). What this Spirit was, they did not yet know. But He would make up for all their deficiencies because He was *Power*.

3. *The Waiting Church* (1²⁻²⁶). Christ had told them to wait for this gift of the Spirit. And here they were

in the Upper Room, waiting. Look at the company. There were 120. Who? Mention those in verse 13. But many more. Nicodemus? Joseph of Arimathea? The man born blind? (St. John 9). The woman who anointed Christ's feet? Mark? The army captain? (Luke 7). Many others. Find them from the Gospels.

How were they waiting? Were they simply doing nothing? No. They were *expecting* something great. They were meantime doing the *duty* at hand (15-26)—electing an apostle. They were *praying* (14). And they were *ready* for whatever Christ might ask. Waiting never means simply doing nothing. When the psalmist says, "On Thee do I wait all the day long," he means an eager, expectant, ready attitude.

4. *Waiting for God.* Now we also have great promises from God. Promises of help and blessing. Above all we have this promise of *power* for our daily tasks. How are we to wait for God's promises to be fulfilled? We may learn from this scene in Acts 1. (1) We must believe them.

"December days were brief and chill,
The winds of March were wild and drear,
And nearer, but receding still,
Spring never would, we thought, be here.
The leaves that burst, the suns that shine,
Had, none the less, their certain date.
And thou, O human heart of mine,
Be still, refrain thyself and wait."

Repeat these lines (from an American poet) or use the simile. God's promises as sure as the coming of spring. (2) We must *pray* for them, and especially pray for the coming to us of this *power*. "Sometimes there happens

on the ocean an experience, entirely familiar to sailors, but which always has in it something beautiful and strange. A vessel, some day, is lying, as seamen say, stark—be calmed, powerless to reach her harbour ; but, as the sailors wait and watch, they notice that while there is no ripple on the water or breeze upon their faces, the little pennant far up at the masthead begins to stir and ripple out. The breeze is all aloft, they say. At once they spread their upper sails, to catch the movement which is all un felt below, and very quietly, straight across a sea which looks hopelessly flat and calm, the vessel holds right on under the impulse of that upper air. So, sometimes, the Spirit of God moves over the lives of men, ‘ all powerful as the wind it comes, as viewless too.’ In the lower levels of life all is still and motionless. But aloft is stirring the current of the higher law ; and the life that spreads its upper sails finds itself borne along as by a miracle across the flatness of life ” (F. G. Peabody, *Afternoons in the College Chapel*). This spreading the upper sails is just prayer, which captures the wind of God’s power. (3) We must do our ordinary duties faithfully as these men and women did, in Acts 1¹⁵⁻²⁶. God’s blessing comes to people in their daily tasks and not to people who neglect these. God’s best gifts come to faithfulness, to the dutiful, and loyal and trustworthy.

Expression Work. 1. Find as many as you can of the people who are likely to have been among the 120 in Acts 1. They are many of them mentioned in the Gospels. 2. Where is an upper chamber mentioned in the Gospels ? What happened there ?

XLIV. PENTECOST

THE HOLY SPIRIT

ACTS 2

A. For the Teacher

1. *The Phenomena.* Two unusual incidents are said to have accompanied the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, the sound "as of a mighty rushing wind" with "cloven tongues like as of fire," and the speaking with "other tongues." (1) With regard to the first it is clear that the phenomena were not wind and fire, but a sound "as of" or "like" wind and tongues "as of" fire. Blunt says that "similar phenomena have not been unknown in similar cases of corporate religious ecstasy, when spiritual enthusiasm seems to be accompanied with outward manifestations." And Principal Andrews says "the 'wind' and the 'fire' are metaphors." Luke does not speak of an actual wind and an actual fire, but uses these words to illustrate the action of the Spirit. Both metaphors are found in the Gospels in the same connection, the former in St. John 3⁸, the latter in St. Matthew 3^{11, 12}." (2) With regard to the speaking with other tongues, the impression Luke gives is that the disciples spoke in foreign languages, each nation hearing the gospel in its own tongue. This is now regarded as a mistaken interpretation of the incident, for the following reasons. (a) The speaking in foreign languages would not provoke the charge of drunkenness; (b) there was no necessity for such a gift, as Greek was well known everywhere; (c) we know from Acts 14⁸⁻¹⁴, that Paul could not speak the language of Lycaonia; (d) in 1 Corinthians the gift of

“speaking with tongues” does not refer to foreign languages but to ecstatic utterances, especially in prayer to God, made under the influence of spiritual excitement (1 Cor. 12¹⁰; 14²⁻²⁸); (e) Peter makes no reference to such a power in his speech. These arguments are conclusive, and Rackham, Blunt and others agree with Andrews in this. The gift of “tongues” was a gift exercised in the early Church and often referred to in the New Testament. It was an ecstatic utterance, to God and not to man, with the spirit and not with the intelligence, and generally unintelligible to the hearers. Paul did not think highly of it. It was a dangerous gift, and needed to be controlled, as it might easily be counterfeited. There have been many parallels to this ecstatic excitement which sometimes accompanies religious revivals (see the examples in the lesson).

2. *The Gift of the Holy Spirit.* “The real significance of Pentecost,” says Andrews, “lies in the fact that on that day the Christians in Jerusalem were clothed with new spiritual power and endowed with divine strength for the task of evangelizing the world.” This was the gift of the Holy Ghost. It must not be supposed the Spirit was now given for the first time. It is one of the great realities of the Old Testament, where every unusual endowment was attributed to the Spirit of God. In the Old Testament the Spirit is just God in His energy and activity in the life of man. Then in the Gospels the miracles and teaching of Jesus are attributed to the Spirit in Him. At Pentecost this gift was bestowed on believers in fuller measure. There is no doubt that a very great experience of power came to these disciples at Pentecost, which transformed them, gave them courage and speech and effectiveness. They described this as the work of the Holy Spirit. It was

due to the influence of their living Lord. They had no theology of it. It was a religious experience of the most definite and wonderful kind. It was their conviction that all good and all achievement, whether of the individual or the Church, was due to the Spirit.

3. *The Speeches in Acts.* It was the custom of all ancient historians to compose speeches which expressed their view of what historical characters would have said in a situation. But the speeches in Acts seem to be more than that. Paul's speeches, e.g. are always in character and obviously contain reminiscences of the Apostle's words. The earlier speeches (those of Peter, for example) appear to be based on good information. They are different from one another and suitable to the occasion. Therefore, though not verbatim, they seem to be in substance historical, good summaries of what the speakers really said. Peter's speech here is primitive in several ways, in his method of using the Old Testament, and in the Gospel he presents. Christ is the fulfilment of Old Testament prediction, and His death and Resurrection are the divine authentication of His position as Saviour and Judge.

B. Notes

Verse 1. *Pentecost*, one of the three great Jewish festivals. Pentecost means "fiftieth," and was held the fiftieth day after the Passover. It was also called the "Feast of Weeks" because it was held seven weeks after the Passover. Pentecost marked the close of the harvest and was an occasion of great rejoicing.

in one place, probably the upper room of 1¹³.

Verse 3. *cloven tongues*, incorrect; "tongues parting asunder" (R.V.).

Verse 4. *other tongues*: foreign languages, say some.
Utterances different from their ordinary speech,
say others.

Verse 6. The crowd is drawn together by the unusual
excitement, and the disciples make their way to
a porch of the Temple.

Verses 9–11. A description of the Jews of the Dispersion,
i.e. the Jews living in all parts of the world,
who had come for the feast. If you take a pencil
and follow a line on the map you get the countries
east of the Roman Empire (Parthia, Media, Elam),
then come west and you touch Mesopotamia, then
westward to Judæa, then up to Asia Minor passing
through Cappadocia to Pontus in the north and
then down west to Asia. Turning inland by
Phrygia we come to the coast at Pamphilia. Then
cross to Egypt, where there were about a million
Jews, then along the coast of Libya (Africa) to
Cyrene, and so to Rome. Crete and Arabia are
added, because Crete represents the islands, and
Arabia was isolated.

Verse 15. *third hour*: 9 a.m.

Verse 23. *lawless men*: Gentiles, outside the Law of
Moses.

Verse 27. *Hell*: better Hades, the abode of the dead.

Verse 42. *doctrine*: better “teaching”; there was no
“doctrine” in our sense so early.

Verse 43. *fear*: better “awe.”

Verse 46. There was no rupture as yet with Judaism.
from house to house. The Christians met in private
houses till the second century.

Verse 47. The Revised translation is better: “and
the Lord added to them day by day such as were
being saved.”

C. *The Lesson*

Refer to last lesson and the attitude of these believers, waiting. For what? The Promise of the Spirit. They hardly knew what that was to be. But to-day we see what it was and its results.

1. *The Gift of the Spirit* (¹⁻¹³). Extraordinary experience. Power swept over them that seemed like the two most powerful things in the world, wind and fire. Luke uses these two words as images to describe the experience because of its results. Great excitement and emotion. Lifted out of themselves. The best way to understand it is to take two parallel incidents. (1) A watch-night service was held in 1739 which began the great movement called the Evangelical Revival. John Wesley describes it thus in his journal : “About three in the morning as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell on the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of His Majesty, we broke out with one voice, ‘We praise Thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.’” Before this, says Andrews, who quotes it, the preaching of Wesley had produced few results, afterwards the most wonderful results happened. (2) In 1914 a great religious meeting was held in London, attended by people of different nations—Chinese Peruvians, Canadians, etc.—who would not understand each other’s tongue; but when any speaker, whatever tongue he spoke in, mentioned the saving love of Christ, a wave of feeling passed through the gathering and broke out in response, which showed that all hearts understood (*The Bible for Youth*,

p. 875). We shall see what this means for us in a moment.

2. *Peter's Speech (14-40).* The great excitement. The crowd drawn together. What did all this mean? What were these people going on about? Were they drunk? It looked like it. Peter stands forth and explains. His speech has four parts. (1) This is not drunkenness, but a great spiritual power from God. Fulfilment of an ancient prediction (14-21). (2) This blessing has come because of Christ. His death and Resurrection God's great message for man's salvation (22-28). (3) Christ is alive, the risen Lord of men, and hence this outpouring of God's power (29-36). (4) Receive Christ, and you will be saved, and receive the same power (37-40). This was the Gospel preached by all the apostles as they went about.

3. *The Results of the Spirit's Coming (41-47).* Luke gives us a picture of the first Christians after they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. A beautiful picture. Try to make this picture vivid and real. Three things especially. (1) The way they were taught. Their only Bible was the Old Testament. But they listened while the apostles told them the story of Christ's life and death and Resurrection. No New Testament; only what is called "oral" instruction. We have the result of such teaching in our first three Gospels, which were written later. (2) Another thing was their fellowship. They were a brotherhood; they shared everything. They shared their possessions, because some were very poor. They prayed together. They all took part in a "love-feast," which ended with the Lord's Supper. They went regularly to the public worship of the Temple, because they had not yet broken off from the Jewish

Church. This sharing was the result of their love for one another. They felt that every one was a brother. (3) The keynote was joy. This was what drew so many to them from outside, their sheer happiness. Think of those two things which were marks of the early Church, joy and brotherly love. Now all this was the result of the Spirit coming to them.

4. But what does all this mean for us ? What *is* the gift of the Spirit ? Is it for us ? What does it *do* for us ? The answer is that the Spirit means *Power, Life*. Look at this electric globe. It is dull, but touch the switch and it glows with radiance. That is what happens when you have the Spirit. Look at that seed lying in the ground. It is just like a piece of dirt. But the rain comes, and lo ! the seed breaks up, and you see the shoots of green coming above the ground, and then the waving harvest. Look at the dull landscape, and then at the same scene when the sun pours down on it and lights it up with beauty. Now that is what the Spirit means. Power, Life, Light. When the Spirit comes on you everything is different, you are strong, happy, *alive*. And this gift is for all of us to-day. Its real fruit is not excitement but just a changed life, people become kind, happy, loving, unselfish, because they believe in Christ and He has sent His power into them. How can we receive it ? By doing just what these disciples did. *Wait* for it (Lessor XLIII).

Expression Work. 1. Look up all that is said in Acts and 1 Corinthians about the gift of Tongues. 2. Make a brief summary of Peter's speech. 3. Look up the passages in the Old Testament that speak of the Spirit of God.

XLV. AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE**SUCCOUR FOR THE NEEDY****ACTS 3***A. For the Teacher*

1. In these early chapters St. Luke gives, not an orderly sequence of events but a series of detached pictures meant to show the kind of things that happened as a result of the outpouring of the Spirit. "Many wonders and signs were done by the apostles," he said in chapter 2⁴³, and this is an example of these. Other examples are 5⁵¹; 9³⁴; 14¹⁰; 28⁸.

2. The miracle is an instance of the "faith cures" of which the Gospels record many. These are paralleled by not a few examples in our own day. The instrument was the personality of Peter, the power was the Spirit of God, and the condition was the faith of the patient. He was not an ordinary beggar this, and Peter, as he fixed his eyes on him, probably saw this.

3. *Diagram of the Temple.* (See next page.)

B. Notes

Verse 1. *ninth hour*: 3 p.m. There were three hours of prayer, 9 a.m., noon, and 3 p.m. (Ps. 55¹⁷; Dan. 6¹⁰).

Verse 2. *the gate Beautiful*. One of the gates of the Temple more beautiful than any others: made of Corinthian brass and adorned in a costly manner with thick plates of silver and gold, 50 cubits high, approached by a flight of fifteen steps. Its exact

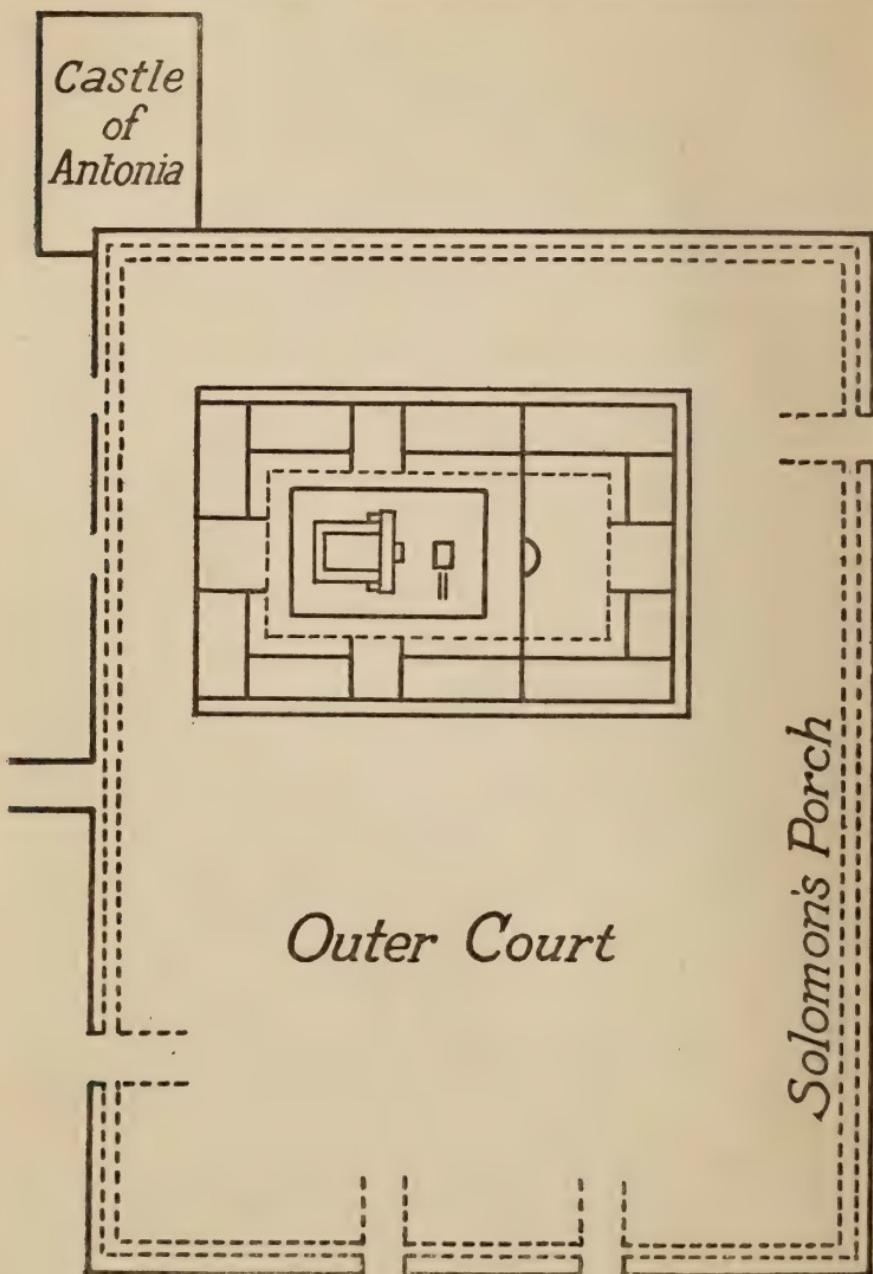


DIAGRAM OF THE TEMPLE.

position doubtful. Probably at entrance of the Court of Women, see diagram.

Verse 6. *Name.* In the Bible name=character. In the name = in the power, by the authority, of a person. Here in the power of the Spirit of Christ.

Verse 7. *feet and ankle bones.* A touch of Luke's medical training.

Verse 11. *porch:* portico or colonnade, outside the Temple. It was really cloisters with pillars on the inside of the outer walls of the Temple enclosure. See Diagram.

Verse 13. *glorified:* aorist referring to the earthly life of Jesus.

son: R.V. servant. The word is used in the Old Testament of the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah. Hence this means that Christ fulfilled this prophecy in Isaiah.

Verse 14. *murderer.* Barabbas (Mark 15⁷; Luke 23¹⁹).

Verse 15. *Prince:* author or inaugurator.

Verse 17. *in ignorance:* cf. Christ's words, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

Verse 19. *times of refreshing:* a phrase for the Messianic age, the golden future of Israel. It would be a time of spiritual revival.

Verse 20. First reference to the Second Coming.

Verse 21. *times of restitution,* or restoration ; a familiar belief. Jewish thought before Christ looked for a renovated and restored world, and a renovated and restored humanity. This is in Peter's mind (Andrews).

Verse 22. Cf. Deuteronomy 18^{15, 19}.

Verse 25. Cf. Genesis 22¹⁸.

Verse 26. *You first*, “to the Jew first” (Rom. 1¹⁶).
having raised up, not a reference to the Resurrection ; the meaning is the same as in verse 22.
Son = servant as in verse 13.

C. *The Lesson*

Introduction. Refer back to the last lesson. Among the things that were said to follow the gift of the Spirit were “wonders” done by the Apostles. This is the first example. It is an instance of what the Spirit of Christ enables men to do.

1. *At the Gate.* Peter and John going up to the Temple to worship at stated hour. Three times of public prayer. The beggar at the gate. Beggars a feature of Eastern life. Often in the Gospels. This man was quite helpless, a cripple. He made his living by begging. This was no disgrace then. Tell the story of the encounter, using Peter’s words and not paraphrasing. Explain “in the name of Jesus, etc.,” “in the name of the law” is by the authority of the law, representing it, having its power behind one. So here. Show how the miracle was done. The power the Spirit, the instrument Peter, the condition the man’s faith. The wonder of the change for the man !

2. *In the Cloisters.* What happened after the miracle. The apostles went on to the Temple to worship ; the man went with them. Great crowd in the “Court of the Women.” See how easily a crowd collects in the street to-day. So then. Peter and John and the man mobbed in the “cloisters of Solomon.” And Peter seized the chance, as he always did, to exalt Christ and to preach Christ. That was the reason of the speech he made. The crowd were interested in the man and

what had happened. And Peter stopped in the crowd and says, "I will explain it to you. It is all due to the power of Christ."

3. *The Speech of Peter.* The theme of the speech is Christ. "We did not do this miracle. Christ did. Christ was killed but He is alive. And there you have a proof of it." Here again Peter preaches the Resurrection and the message of the Spirit. Here also again he presses on his hearers the duty of repentance and acceptance of Christ. This will bring them forgiveness and hasten on the good time when everything and everybody will be changed and made what they ought to be.

4. *What does all this mean for us to-day?* It means that our religion is a gospel for the "lame," i.e. for the needy, physically needy and in every way. It means that this gospel and this help are to come to needy people through us, as they came through Peter. Does the Church of Christ help the "lame" to-day? Yes, in many ways, by foreign missions, by social agencies, by inspiring men with the desire to remedy evils. Perhaps above all by helping to keep men straight and decent, and preventing them sinking down to the gutter. "Why do ragged folk never go to church?" was put as a question to the editor of *Punch*. His reply was, "Because, when people go to church they soon cease to be ragged."

And how can we ourselves do what Christ asks us to do? By helping whatever needy persons we know, by acts of kindness, by words of kindness, by feeling that we must do something to help the poor, the drunkard, the lonely. Who is there you can help?

5. *The Power for this.* We must not forget that Peter healed the cripple because he had such faith in Christ

The Spirit of God gives power to help those who have faith in Christ. It is told of a Pope that once when this passage was read to him he said, "Well, we can't say any longer 'silver and gold have I none.'" To which his chaplain replied, "No, neither can we say, 'Rise up and walk.'" If we had faith like Peter's we would have power like Peter's. Is this power open to us? It is one of the wonderful things about this New Testament that it says "yes, it is."

Expression Work. 1. Write down all the names Peter gives Christ here, and explain them (Servant of the Lord, Christ of God, Prophet, Prince of Life, the Holy and Righteous One). 2. Find out the places where beggars are mentioned in the New Testament. 3. Get the class to do something this week for a Cripples' Home.

XLVI. THE ARREST OF THE APOSTLES

COURAGE

ACTS 4

A. *For the Teacher*

1. Another example of the fruits of the Spirit in Acts was courage to face danger. Twice the apostles were arrested within a short period, and they showed themselves entirely fearless, a great contrast with the time when "they all forsook Him and fled," and Peter cowered before the word of a servant maid. The secret of this change was the gift of the Spirit which made Peter and the others *new men*.

2. The “communism” of the early Church (³²⁻³⁷) was not communism at all. It was purely voluntary, a temporary measure designed to relieve poverty of an acute character. It was soon given up as unworkable. But even at that time it was limited in its extent, for one of the prominent Church members still possessed a house of her own (12¹²). Two examples of this voluntary sacrifice are given, one (that of Barnabas) favourable, the other (Ananias) the opposite.

3. The reasons why the authorities began to persecute now may be given. They had done nothing hitherto, because the death of Jesus seemed likely to bring the Christian cause to an end. But the healing of the lame man, and the excitement it produced, might easily have roused a popular movement, dangerous to Roman authority. This the Sadducees were anxious to avoid, their policy being purely worldly and against any disturbance of the *status quo*. They had an additional reason for interfering in the fact that the apostles were preaching the Resurrection, in which they disbelieved, and the resurrection of a criminal whom they had put to death! The Pharisees took no part in the arrest of the apostles because on all the points mentioned above they were on the opposite side to the Sadducees. The attitude of the apostles did not seem so hostile to Pharisaic legalism as was that of Jesus, and the Pharisees were not sorry at the prospect of trouble to their rivals the Sadducees.

B. Notes

Verse 1. *The captain of the Temple*, not a soldier or a Roman, but the head of the Temple guard which was composed of Priests and Levites. He had to

keep order in the Temple and was next in rank to the High Priest in the Sanhedrim.

Verse 2. Note that it is only the Sadducees who act, owing (Luke says) to their antipathy to the doctrine of the Resurrection.

Verse 3. No meeting of Sanhedrim could be held after sunset.

Verse 4. Note the growth of the Church from 3000 (2⁴¹).

Verse 5. *Rulers, elders and scribes*: a phrase for the Sanhedrim, the supreme Jewish court. "Rulers" were the high priests, "elders" might be priests or laymen.

Verse 6. *Annas*, an ex-high priest, but retaining the courtesy title and by his personality exercising a predominant influence.

Verse 8. *Filled with the Holy Ghost*: see Matthew 10¹⁹.

Verse 11. *stone . . . corner*. From Psalm 118²². The "chief stone of the corner" is the stone at the angle which holds two sides together. In Roman quarries an official inspected all stones taken out and marked those rejected with *Repr* (for reprobatum). The Jewish leaders had rejected Christ but God had reversed their verdict (Andrews).

Verse 13. *unlearned and ignorant*, not = uneducated, but simply "not accredited teachers," not professionally trained in college.

Verse 15. How did Luke know this? from Paul who was a member of the Sanhedrim?

Verse 25. Psalm 2^{1, 21}.

Verse 27. child = servant, as before (see 3¹³), so also in verse 30 here.
anointed, this is the literal meaning of "Christ," the Anointed.

Verse 31. *The place was shaken.* In his journal George Fox says of a meeting at which he was praying : “ The Lord’s power was so great that the house seemed to be shaken.”

Verse 34. We see here the beginning of church organization. The apostles are the distributors. Poverty was constant in Jerusalem. There was no commerce or trade, and the city lived on the crowds of visitors. There was little regular employment.

Verse 36. *Joses* : R.V. Joseph ; *Consolation* = R.V. exhortation, the same word as Paraclete in St. John.

Verse 37. *Cyprus.* There was a great colony of Jews in Cyprus. Hence (and because it was the native place of Barnabas) the Christian mission began there.

C. The Lesson

Introduction. We have had one example of what the gift of the Spirit did for believers. Here is another. It gave them Power (Lesson XLV). But it gave them Courage also to face anything.

1. The Arrest (1[–]12). While Peter was speaking the Rulers came on him with the Captain of the Temple, and arrested the two. Why the Priests only active in this (see under *A*) and not the Pharisees. Peter now before the very court that tried and condemned his Master ! The result might be the same ! The question put to them (⁷), and Peter’s answer (^{9–12}). A great answer and a great testimony to Christ. The Rejected Stone and its Destiny (¹¹).

2. The Acquittal (13[–]31). The effect of this answer Surprised at a man not trained in College being able to speak like this. Reason found in Jesus, i.e. in the

power He gave to His disciples, made them new men, men of power in all directions. After Peter's answer the Rulers were at a loss. They could not deny the fact, the healed cripple, so warned the apostles not to go on preaching Christ. Peter's answer (^{19, 20}). Find parallels to it. For example, Socrates at his trial said to his judges, "I shall obey God rather than you," a remarkable parallel. Also Galileo, the martyrs, the Covenanters. Contrast here the old Peter and the new, the unstable, changeable Peter of the Gospels, the man who denied Jesus and was afraid at His trial, and the Peter of this scene! That is what the Spirit of God does for a man.

How did Peter get this courage? The answer is in ⁵²⁴⁻³⁰. Show that the answer is in one word, *Faith*. Peter believed with all his heart in *God*, and in *His cause*. In the *God* who is behind all truth and goodness. Nothing can withstand Him.

"It fortifies my soul to know
That, though I perish, Truth is so ;
That, howsoe'er I stray and range,
.Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change,
I steadier step when I recall
That if I slip, Thou dost not fall."

—A. H. CLOUGH.

And in the *cause* of God. That cannot fail, because it is God's cause. The American hero captain John Brown, when he was asked why superior numbers had failed to hold their own against him, said he supposed it was "because they lacked a Cause." Anyone who has faith in God and in a cause cannot be overcome.

3. *Sacrifice* (³²⁻³⁷). Show how the ordinary members of the Church showed the same courage in giving up

for others. Sacrifice needs courage of a fine kind. This was the brave spirit of the new believers.

4. What this scene (chapter 4) shows us is one of the finest things in the world, Courage. Courage may be the spirit that faces danger or death without flinching. Many examples of that in the War, and in history. But also it is the spirit that faces duty that is difficult without hesitation. For example, it is a difficult thing to say "No" to temptation sometimes. Children in school are carried away by some boy or girl into evil because they are afraid to stand out. They are "dared" to do something wrong, and think it brave to do it, whereas it is cowardice. It is also difficult to confess Christ in some companies. The incident of saying prayers before boys in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. It is difficult to give up our own pleasure for the sake of others. This moral courage is one of the rarest and most splendid things in life. It comes to us when we really believe in Christ.

" So nigh is grandeur to our dust.
So near to God is man ;
When Duty whispers low 'Thou must,'
The youth replies 'I can.' "

Expression Work. 1. Who were the Sadducees ? What was the Sanhedrim ? 2. Give examples from history of courage in facing danger. And examples of ways in which we may need to be brave in another way. 3. Describe the early Church as you see it in chapters 2 and 4 of Acts.

XLVII. STEPHEN

A LIVING CHURCH

ACTS 6, 7, 8¹⁻³

A. For the Teacher

1. The story of Stephen may be taught as that of the first Christian martyr. But this aspect has already been presented in last lesson. And in any case the significance of Stephen is far greater than his own personal qualities suggest. It lies in the fact that he asserted the Religion of the Spirit, a religion free from the shackles of tradition. And this is the point of view adopted in the lesson.

2. The Seven officials were not "deacons," nor is this the organization of the diaconate. But it is the beginning of a definite organization. At first the alms of the Church were distributed by the donors (2⁴¹⁻⁴⁷). Then the distribution was committed to the apostles (4³²⁻³⁷). Here we come to the third stage. The apostles found the task too burdensome, and seven men were chosen for the work. The office was temporary, but no doubt it suggested the later diaconate. Notice the democratic character of the Church. The community elects, the apostles only confirm and bless.

3. *Stephen's Speech.* This is clearly a genuine reminiscence. It is "individual in tone and treatment" (Blunt). At first sight it looks like a rambling account of Old Testament history, but when read carefully, it is seen to be a very skilful statement of two points, (1) that religion is independent of places and has always

in it the seeds of growth, and (2) that the Jews were an ungrateful people and rejected their prophets, just as they rejected Jesus. Read the speech over with these two points in your mind, and you will see how admirable it is. In teaching older classes these two points may be briefly explained, and then the speech read over with its fullness of instances. The real meaning of Stephen's brief ministry cannot be grasped unless his death is seen in the light of these two points. What Stephen contended for was a religion that was not tied down to places and doctrines but was free to develop its own life.

4. Historically, the significance of this event was that now Christianity for the first time began to be separated from Judaism. Hitherto it was a Jewish sect. The disciples worshipped in the Temple (3¹), and performed all their religious duties as Jews. After Stephen's death the Christians became a separate Church, and in the most literal sense the blood of the first martyr was the seed of the Church. And moreover, Stephen's broad ideas were the preparation for Paul. They reappear in Paul (Blunt). As Augustine said, "If Stephen had not prayed, the Church would not have Paul."

B. Notes

Chapter vi. 1. *disciples*: first occurrence of the word in Acts.

Grecians: "Grecian Jews" (R.V.). There were two classes of Jews; (1) "Hebrews," orthodox, Hebrew-speaking Jews who lived in Palestine, and (2) "Hellenists," Jews who spoke Greek and lived abroad, used a Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint. It is the latter that are meant by "Grecians." The two classes were, of

course, represented in the Christian body. There was some bad feeling between the two classes of Jews, and this was maintained in the Church.

widows. Prominence is given to this class because the lot of widows in Eastern lands was specially hard. The Jews had a special fund for widows.

Verse 2. *serve tables* : either (1) the tables on which the common meal was served, hence the distribution of food, or (2) tables on which money contributions were laid, hence the care of the Church's finance (Andrews).

multitude : better "Community," the Church, and so in verse 5.

Verse 5. *full of faith.* Note, the Spirit necessary for business as well as for purely religious duties.

proselyte, an adherent converted to Judaism. Note that all the names are Greek, therefore chosen from the Hellenist group.

Verse 6. *laid hands on them* : a Jewish custom, used in giving a scholar authority to teach, and in other ways (Andrews). Purely symbolical with no "grace" attaching to it.

Verse 9. Does this verse point to one synagogue ? or more ? The general view is two, the southern (African), and northern (Asia Minor). It seems to me far more likely that there were five. There were 480 synagogues in Jerusalem.

Verse 10. Eloquence due to the Spirit.

Verse 12. Note that the Pharisees, who had hitherto stood aloof from persecution, come in now, because of Stephen's attitude to the Law. The people too are hostile for the same reason.

Chapter vii. 56. *Son of Man* : here only outside the Gospels.

Verse 58. *witnesses*. They had to throw the first stones at the victim (Deut. 17⁷).

Verse 60. like the words of Jesus (St. Luke 23³⁴).

Chapter viii. 1. *consenting*: sympathizing. Paul was a leader in the riot.

great persecution. From now a systematic attack on Christianity.

scattered abroad. Apparent disaster but really the cause of the expansion of Christianity.

C. *The Lesson*

Introduction. An interval of some time between the last event and this. Probably a year or two. The Christians were already divided into two classes, Greek-speaking and Hebrew-speaking¹. Things were getting into confusion owing to the growth of the Church. The apostles had so much to do. Hence the need to appoint some men to help them.

1. *The Seven* (6¹⁻⁷). Two classes of Jews (see note on 6¹). The same classes of Christians. Trouble between them. A grievance. The remedy—the Seven appointed. Note how free the Church was. Not ruled by the apostles. The Seven appointed by the Church members, and “blessed” by the apostles. This is the beginning of the “organization” of the Church. Explain this. And point out that, according to Luke, the Spirit of God is necessary for all kinds of qualities, not only for faith but for all ability. The Spirit of God is in us, and is the source of all good in us.

2. *Stephen* (6, 7¹⁵). The best known of the Seven. His eloquence. His debates in the synagogues of the “Hellenists.” Take the map and show where each of

these places (⁹) is. Jews from these places were in Jerusalem on a visit and came together in a church of their own. Each nationality had its own synagogue. Defeated in argument, these Jews plotted against Stephen. The same kind of plot as that against Jesus. The same charge (blasphemy). Stephen brought before Sanhedrim, as Jesus was. Note how like at all points to Jesus, even to his last words.

3. *The Speech (7¹⁻⁵³).* Two great points in it (see under A). A rough division is as follows: (1) God revealed Himself to the patriarchs away from the Holy Land altogether; hence religion is not tied to any places. (2) The Jews resisted Moses and have done so to all teachers. (3) All this applies to the Temple, which is not necessary to religion, and to the Jews who have done to Jesus what they did to others.

4. *Stephen's Death (7⁵⁴⁻⁶⁰).* This was not an execution but the result of mob violence. The witnesses and their duty. To perform it they had to cast off their outer robe. Saul's part. Stephen's last words. A wonderful and moving scene.

• 5. *The Result (8¹⁻³).* Scattering of Christians. Notice, the apostles are not persecuted (8¹, "except the apostles"). It was the Hellenist Christians, who sympathized with Stephen, who were persecuted. Probably the apostles did not share Stephen's views as yet. Indeed we know they did not. This persecution was a great blessing, as it led at once to the spread of Christianity and the conversion of the Gentiles. A deep cleft was driven between Judaism and the new religion.

6. *What Stephen meant for the Church then.* Up to this time Christianity was just a sect of the Jewish

religion with one special belief, that Jesus was Messiah. Now it is entirely cut off from Jewish religion. It is declared to be independent of the Temple and the Law. That was the great message of Stephen. "We do not need the Temple and the Law. Christ is our Lord and our religion."

7. *What Stephen means for us.* What Stephen really said was this, that religion, if it is real and living, must not be bound up for ever with the past. It must grow, it must be free to learn from God in its own day. The real divine quality of the Church is that it can change. It is living, and therefore it can grow. We ought not to be afraid of new truth and new light. *We also have the Spirit of God.* That is what Stephen said. "The Temple and the Law were necessary for the past. They are not necessary now, because we have Christ and the Spirit." So we can say to-day. Our religion is the Religion of the Spirit, and therefore we must not be tied down to anything in the past. Explain the Master's words about new wine and old wine-skins. By the death of Stephen "the Gospel truth was wrenched free for ever from the trammels of the past" (J. A. Robertson, *The Romance of the New Testament*).

Expression Work. 1. Write down a brief summary of Stephen's speech. 2. Note the points at which the experience and the words of Stephen are the same as those of Jesus. 3. Explain the difference between Hebrews and Hellenists. 4. Find the words of Paul himself about his persecution of the Christians (in Acts, Galatians and Philippians).

XLVIII. PHILIP'S MISSIONS**CHRIST FOR ALL****ACTS 8*****A. For the Teacher***

1. The main objects of the Book of Acts are to describe (1) the extension of the Church from Jerusalem to Rome, (2) the transformation of Christianity from a Jewish sect to a universal religion, and (3) Paul's ministry as embodying both aims. The first stage of this twofold process is shown in this chapter through (1) the mission to Samaria and (2) the admission of the Ethiopian eunuch, who was not a Jew, to the Church.

2. The Samaritans were a half-breed race. They were descended from the Assyrian colonists who came into Northern Israel to take the place of the Israelites who were deported to Assyria. These Assyrians married Jewish women and the Samaritans were the result. They accepted only the Pentateuch, but they claimed to be Jews, and had a rival temple on Mount Gerizim. They also looked for the Messiah (John 4²⁵). The Jews, however, despised them as of impure race, and the Samaritans hated the Jews in turn. This made the mission of Philip all the more remarkable.

3. Simon Magus is a figure typical of the time. He is the first of several sorcerers mentioned in Acts. "The whole East was full of such men, some of them genuine and sincere and learned, most of them charlatans, who by various methods laid claim to magical power and knowledge, and found in the excited religious expectations of the people a ready and profitable market."

(Blunt). Cf. the sorcerer Elymas in Cyprus, the fortuneteller at Philippi, the exorcists at Ephesus. Simon appears to have been regarded by the Samaritans as a kind of Messiah, as an Incarnation of the Power of God.

4. Philip the Evangelist was one of the Seven (Acts 6⁵). He lived later at Cæsarea with his four daughters (21^{8, 9}). When Paul visited him at Cæsarea he was accompanied by Luke, who probably got his knowledge of the mission to Samaria from Philip himself (Andrews).

B. Notes

Verse 5. *preached* Christ : “ Proclaimed unto them the Christ ” (R.V.), i.e. the Messiah they expected (St. John 4²⁵).

Verse 10. *great* : a title among the Jews for God. Probably Simon represented himself as an emanation of God or a super-Messiah.

Verse 23. *Thou art in the gall*, etc. : “ I see you are a bitter poison and a limb of mischief ” (Grant), referring to the evil effects Simon might produce. Expressions borrowed from Deuteronomy 29¹⁸ and Isaiah 58⁶.

Verse 26. *Angel of the Lord*. This is Luke’s way of saying that a divine impulse came to Philip (Andrews).

which is desert refers either to the road or the city. If to the former, the desert route. If to the latter, the older city of Gaza which was now in ruins.

Verse 27. *Ethiopia*. The country south of Egypt. Its queens were all called “ the Candace ” as the rulers of Egypt were called “ the Pharaoh,” of old Russia “ the Czar,” of old Germany “ the Kaiser.”

Verse 39. *caught away*: nothing miraculous. Philip left the Ethiopian, impelled by direction of the Spirit.

Verse 40. *was found*: was next heard of. He goes off on an evangelistic tour in the coast cities from Ashdod (Azotus) to Cæsarea where he settled.

C. *The Lesson*

Introduction. Refer to the Persecution (8¹⁻⁴). How God spreads the seed (like the pollen of flowers in a storm), bringing good out of evil. Show the aim of Acts, and how here in chapter 8 we have an example in the work of Philip.

1. *In Samaria (4-25).*

(1) Who the Samaritans were. The bad feeling between them and the Jews. Race feeling between black and white, between yellow and white. The Gospel alone can abolish this. Hence Philip's mission to Samaria. (2) Simon. The place he held among the Samaritans. Who he was. Sorcery in that age. Simon not wicked but out for gain, like many other sorcerers. His "conversion" not real (¹⁸). It meant that he recognized in Jesus One who could do greater things than he could. (3) The visit of the apostles. Why? Peter and Simon.

2. *On the Road to Gaza.* Philip's second mission. A new evangelistic tour. Guided by the Spirit at every stage. The meeting of Philip and the Ethiopian. Divinely arranged. Who the man was, a high official (Chancellor of Exchequer) at the court of the Candace. Also a "Proselyte" of Judaism, i.e. an adherent. Many of these in Acts, men attracted to the synagogue by its

pure worship, not "members" but adherents. An earnest seeking soul. He had bought a copy of the "Book" of Isaiah in Jerusalem where he had been to keep the feasts. Interview with Philip. His conversion and baptism.

3. *Notice that Christ is for all.* Presented here to a sorcerer and a negro. No difference. We all need Christ and Christ is Saviour of all men. No distinction of race in the fold of Christ. What Christ can do for the negro. Read the story of Booker Washington. Or read the wonderful book of Albert Schweitzer, *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest* (one of the best missionary books). The cry of the African forests reached this cultured doctor, theologian and musician. Here is one of his experiences. A negro was brought to him in great suffering. There was an operation. "Now it is finished, and I wait for the sick man's awakening. Scarcely has he recovered consciousness when he stares about him and cries again and again, 'I've no more pain! I've no more pain!' His hand feels for mine and will not let it go. Then I begin to tell him and others who are in the room that it is the Lord Jesus who has told the doctor and his wife to come to Ogowe. . . . The African sun is shining through the coffee bushes into the dark shed, but we, black and white, sit side by side and feel we know by experience the meaning of Christ's words, 'And all ye are brethren.'" Philip and Schweitzer doing the same work, winning men to Christ. That is the Church's business. Whether it be clever, philosophic Simon or a poor negro, the same message and the same Saviour. One way of salvation, through Christ.

Expression Work. 1. Gather examples of sorcery

from the Book of Acts. 2. Find references to the Samaritans, in Old Testament and New Testament. 3. Turn up a verse in the first chapter of Acts which shows the aim of the book.

XLIX. THE CONVERSION OF SAUL CONVERSION

ACTS 9

A. For the Teacher

1. We have now come to the most important event in the early Church's history, the conversion of St. Paul. It is important because of what he was, and what he did for the Christian religion. He was a very great man, and he was the chief instrument in tearing the Gospel away from the shackles of Judaism and sending it out into the world as a universal religion.

2. Saul (as he was called at first in Acts) was a native of Tarsus, a great city, a centre of the lumber trade, and the seat of one of the leading universities of the world. He had probably been well educated, and knew Greek well; like all Jewish boys he had learnt a trade, the local Cilician trade of tent-weaving. "He was a Roman citizen by birth; and therefore, as Tarsus did not possess the Roman *civitas*, his father must have been a freedman, or must have received the gift as a favour from, or for service to, some Roman notable. Thus the family belonged to the ranks of the provincial aristocracy, and held a position of distinction and of at least moderate wealth. . . . Saul's Greek name was

apparently *Paulus*, which suggests a connection of gratitude with some member of the Æmilian house (of which Paulus was a cognomen). He was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, and a ‘Pharisee of the Pharisees,’ and had come to Jerusalem to be educated in the Law and the Tradition by Gamaliel, and had become ‘more exceedingly zealous for the Law,’ i.e. he was one of the rising young men of Pharisaic Judaism” (Blunt). To this two things may be added. (1) Sir William Ramsay thinks that Paul was very well off later in life, and is treated everywhere as a man of means, having probably inherited his family fortune. (2) Sabatier (*The Life of Paul*) as well as recent writers like Foakes—Jackson (*The Life of St. Paul*) think that Paul got very little from Greek sources, and that all his debt is due to Jewish training.

3. The story of Saul’s conversion is told three times in Acts. There are differences and discrepancies in the accounts, but they are unimportant. “These are discrepancies of precisely the sort that one always finds existing in the most faithful repetitions of the same narrative. Their explanation lies in their very triviality. They cannot in any way affect the reality of the event in question” (Sabatier). With regard to the differences from Paul’s account of his conversion in Galatians 1, it must be remembered that in Galatians Paul is dealing with his inner history, while in Acts Luke is relating the external history. This explains the different emphasis and the omissions in Galatians.

4. Was the vision of Christ objective or subjective? external and physical or merely spiritual? Wood (*Life and Religion of St. Paul*) points out that Paul sharply differentiates the appearance of Christ to him

at this time from all his other visions of the Lord. In 1 Corinthians 15⁸ he claims this appearance of Christ as the last of a series of such appearances to others, and of the same kind, i.e. objective and external. This is the main fact. And, as the same writer points out, the test of reality is the effect on a man's life, what the experience gives to a man of power for living. If we believe in God we may accept the story of Paul's conversion without hesitation as true in essentials.

5. In teaching this lesson the main facts should be presented simply to young children. But with older classes the whole subject of conversion should be dealt with, since it is just at the adolescent age young people are most deeply interested, and most conversions occur.

B. Notes

Verse 2. Had the Sanhedrim at Jerusalem jurisdiction over other cities? There is difference of opinion. Wood says that it extended to Alexandria, and probably to a number of other cities.

Verse 3. Why to Damascus? Because it contained a large number of Jews, and (probably) of converts to "the Way."

Verses 5-6. *It is hard . . . the Lord said unto him:* omitted in R.V. because not in the best MSS.

Verse 7. A discrepancy here with 22⁹. Of no importance.

Verse 10. *Ananias*: possibly a refugee from Jerusalem.

Verse 11. This is still the main street of Damascus.

Verses 12, 15. Andrews thinks that in these verses Luke exaggerates and develops the facts.

Verse 13. *saints*. First occurrence in Acts of this name for Christians.

Verse 18. *scales*, not physical. A figure for returning sight.

Verse 20. *Son of God*: a title of Messiah, not metaphysical. The question of Christ's relation to the Godhead is not yet raised.

Verse 22. *Saul increased . . .*: a time of growth and understanding.

Verse 23. After many days. Saul was three years in Arabia before his visit to Jerusalem (Gal. 1¹⁶⁻¹⁸).

Verse 25. Houses were built on the wall, therefore Saul let down through a window.

Verse 26. Why afraid of him? Because they had heard little of his conversion, and knew his notorious fury.

Verse 27. Only to the *two* Apostles, Peter and James (Gal. 1¹⁹).

C. *The Lesson*

Introduction. Begin by pointing out that now we have come to a very important part of the story, the life and work of one of the greatest men in history. Tell what you know of his past life. Show how he had become a furious persecutor (8¹⁻⁴). His fury against the new religion.

1. *Mission to Damascus.* Why to Damascus? Because so many Jews. Probably Christians driven from Jerusalem by the persecution. Distance from Jerusalem 150 miles, a week's journey. Look at map. Who were with Saul; the guards from the Sanhedrim. In this long week Saul had time for thought. He was greatly troubled. Many things had created doubts in his mind. (1) Stephen's preaching and heroic death. (2) His own failure to find peace in keeping God's Law

(Rom. 7). (3) The quiet courage and faith of the Christians. Saul a downright soul. Christians either absolutely right or absolutely wrong. Were they right? Were all these thoughts the "pricks" against which he was kicking? (Acts 26¹⁴). Approach to Damascus. The glorious scenery.

2. *The Crisis.* The scene described in the chapter. The appearance of Christ. Quote the dialogue. Saul's blindness. His entry into Damascus, so different from what he had planned!

3. *In Damascus.* The three days' blindness—time for understanding. Outward darkness but inward light. Saul and Ananias. Saul's recovery and proclamation of Jesus as Messiah. Rage of Jews. Natural! The plot against Saul, and his escape (Acts 9²⁵; 2 Cor. 11³³).

4. In Arabia (Gal. 1¹⁷). For part of three years. Why? To think over things. Cf. Moses in Midian. Jesus in the wilderness. Perhaps he took copies of Gospel stories with him. The "Arabia" to which Saul went was the part of the country near Damascus.

5. *In Damascus again.*

6. *Visit to Jerusalem.* The Christians there shy of him, as was natural. The generous conduct of Barnabas. Saul with two apostles (Peter and James, Gal. 1^{18, 19}). Preaching to the Hellenist Jews. Fresh danger. Saul sent off to Tarsus.

7. That was Saul's "Conversion." What it means. How he became a Christian. We can almost see the process in his mind. Two things he was always quite sure of: (1) It was the grace of God to which he owed this blessing (Gal. 1^{15, 16}), and (2) it was Christ Himself

he saw, and so became sure that Christ was really alive, and was "the Son of God." From these things he never swerved.

8. There are many conversions like this. The thief on the cross. Augustine. Bunyan. See James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* (chapters on Conversion). Tell the story of Augustine's conversion from his "Confessions." Contrast the way in which the other apostles came to know Christ, slowly, gradually, passing into the light. Some come one way, others in the other. The main thing is to come to the faith they all had. That is conversion.

9. The only test of real conversion is its effect on our life. See what this did for Saul! What it made him, what it gave him, what it has meant to the world through him, and so with us.

Expression Work. 1. Trace on a map Saul's route from Jerusalem to Damascus. 2. Compare the three accounts of the conversion in Acts and the one in Galatians 1³. In what sense is conversion always "sudden"? and always prepared?

L. CORNELIUS

SEEKING AND FINDING

ACTS 10

A. *For the Teacher*

1. The importance of this incident lies in the fact that it is a watershed in the progress of the Church. "From it the streams of Gentile and Judaistic Christianity flow right and left; one to lose itself in the barren

sands of the second-century heresy, while the former emerges as the river which vitalizes all the Christian ages. From Jerusalem, with its stifling atmosphere of reaction, the scene changes to Cæsarea on the sea, the civil and military capital of the province. This city was the home, or the headquarters, of Philip the Evangelist, and afterwards, for two fruitful years, the prison of St. Paul" (Grant, *Ideals of the Early Church*, p. 67). Less picturesquely put, this event marks an official recognition of the admission of the Gentiles to the Christian body, and this as based on a principle (10¹⁵). The Church did not, indeed, go the whole length as yet, for Cornelius was an adherent of Judaism already. It was left to Paul to admit the pure outside Gentiles. But this was an important step in the process.

2. Luke's tendency to externalize spiritual influences is seen in this story. Sometimes the divine inspiration came through an angel, sometimes through the Spirit. The thing Luke wishes to express is that it was of God. No doubt Peter was much occupied with speculation and debates on the subject of the Gentiles. His dream shows this. But the action he took was one suggested to him at every stage by the guiding Spirit of God.

B. Notes

Verse 1. *Cæsarea* (see under *A*). The Roman Governor of the Province lived here, and only went to Jerusalem at the times of the feasts (as Pilate did).

Verse 2. Description of a proselyte of Judaism. He belonged to a class of people who worshipped with the Jews but were not circumcized: Cf. 13^{16, 26}; 17^{4, 17}; St. Luke 7⁵.

Verse 3. *evidently*: rather "manifestly." *ninth hour*: 3 p.m.

Verse 5. Cornelius had probably heard of Peter from Philip who was now preaching in Cæsarea (8⁴⁰).

Verse 7. *devout*: probably also a proselyte.

Verse 8. *Joppa*: 30 miles from Cæsarea.

Verse 9. *Housetop to pray*. Cf. 2 Kings 23¹²; 1 Samuel 9^{25, 26}; Jeremiah 19¹³.

Verse 12. The coney, the pig and the hare were forbidden to the Jews as “unclean.” How scrupulous they were about this matter is shown in Daniel (1^{8 ff.}).

Verse 15. This implies abolition of the law in Leviticus 11.

Verse 17. *doubted*: “was much perplexed” (R.V.).

Verse 25. *worshipped*: homage due to a messenger from God.

Verse 30. *a man . . . apparel*: the angel of verse 3.

Verses 36–8. An involved sentence. The main clause is “Ye know” in verse 37. “Ye know the message which God sent . . . —the message, I mean, which was published throughout all Judæa . . . the message how that God anointed Jesus,” etc.

Verse 42. *He*: i.e. God.

Verse 44. A Gentile Pentecost. Every new departure is in Acts marked by a baptism of the Spirit.

Verse 45. They of the circumcision, i.e. those mentioned in verse 23, six in number, as Peter afterwards tells in chapter 11.

C. The Lesson

Introduction. There was a great question that all thoughtful Christians were asking at this time. For

whom was Christ sent? For Jews only, or for the world? (See Lesson XLVII.) We know how Stephen answered it. But the ordinary Christian Jew found it very difficult, because the Jews were God's chosen people, and it was hard for them to believe that God was now to extend His purpose to others. There was a great wall of partition between the Jews as God's chosen race and all the rest, like the two kinds of meat, clean and unclean. We see in Acts how God was gradually leading the Christian Church to understand the greatness and width of His plan for the world. Here is the Gospel making for the open sea! Peter was one of the first after Stephen to be taught this great truth that Christ is for all. And it was Cornelius who was the means of teaching him the lesson.

1. *Cornelius* (1-8). Cæsarea, a garrison town. A Roman Legion had 6,000 men, divided into ten cohorts or bands, and each cohort had six centurions, so that each centurion had 100 soldiers under him. Cornelius therefore was, like the Roman in Luke 7, a Roman officer. Description of him in verse 2. A good man. An eager seeker after the best. His vision means that he had heard of Christ and was deeply interested. God put it into his mind to seek for a fuller knowledge and Philip had probably told him about Peter.

2. *Peter in Joppa* (9-16). Housetop flat. What it was used for, see note on verse 9. Peter as well as Cornelius being prepared by God! His dream of the sheet full of all kinds of beasts. A true Jewish picture of the world as a Jew saw it. The great lesson he learned ("three times" to emphasize it). *Nobody* "common" or unclean. All God's children and our brethren.

3. *The Deputation* (¹⁷⁻²³). A coincidence ! Yes, but many coincidences are Providences, the result of God's guiding hand. So here. The deputation give their message and tell their story.

4. *Peter and Cornelius* (²³⁻³³). The cordial welcome. Cornelius had called together a gathering of his relatives and friends. Peter knows he is doing what a Jew would think wrong in even coming into this company, but he manfully confesses how he has learned better (^{28, 29}). Cornelius tells his tale again, and says humbly that they are all waiting to hear Peter's message.

5. *Peter's Speech* (³⁴⁻⁴³). A fine speech. He starts with one of the noblest things ever said (^{34, 35}). God is the God of all faithful souls. Then comes a beautiful summary of Christ's ministry (³⁶⁻⁴¹). And finally a presentation of Christ in His greatness as Saviour and Judge (^{42, 43}). Read the speech in a good translation, like Weymouth's or Moffatt's.

6. *The Gentile Pentecost* (^{44, 45}). The one occasion on which the gift of the Spirit came *before* baptism. But no doubt as to what it meant. God had shown by this gift of the Spirit that these were true and worthy believers. Who can gainsay God when He speaks and acts ?

7. *A Difficult Lesson* (^{11¹⁻¹⁸}). The Church at Jerusalem scandalized by Peter's conduct. But he defends it and explains what has happened. And they could no more resist the facts than he could.

8. *What has the Story to say to us ?* Well, there are two things. (1) Here is a true *seeker*. Notice what he had already (²). A good deal ! Oliver Cromwell wrote to his daughter, "And thus to be a seeker is to be of the best sect next to a finder ; and such an one shall

every faithful, humble seeker be at the end. Happy seeker, happy finder ! ” There are such souls in every land and in every religion. Principal Cairns tells of a Hindu saint who was dissatisfied with his own religion, and every day he prayed this prayer, “ O God, show me who Thou art. Tell me what Thou art. And help me to find Thee.” In the end he came upon a copy of the Gospels, and light flooded his soul. This was what he had been seeking all his life ! Notice the great lesson, God is in all true seeking. The true seeker has already Christ in him. (2) Here is a true *finder*. Cornelius had much. But he lacked the *real thing*. That is what the Spirit means. The Spirit is life, certainty, power, reality. Look at the difference between Southey’s verse and Shelley’s. Shelley has the real thing. Southey has correct verse, Shelley has inspiration, life, poetry. Turner once stood before a painting by one of his pupils. He praised it for its fine qualities, and then, snapping his fingers, he added “ But it wants *that* ! ” Cornelius lacked “ *that*. ” And he got it, because all honest seeking always finds. Seek the best and you will find Christ. Seek the best and you will get the Spirit, you will get God in His love.

Expression Work. 1. Describe the steps we have already taken in seeing the Gospel coming out from the narrow limits of Judaism to the freedom it is going to have : Stephen, Philip’s preaching to the Samaritans, and baptism of the Ethiopian, Cornelius. What is yet to be done ? and who did it ? 2. Find out the Jewish law of clean and unclean in Leviticus 11, and show how difficult this made it for Jewish travellers. 3. For what purposes was the housetop used ? Collect examples from the Old Testament and New Testament.

LI. THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

PROVIDENCE

ACTS 11¹⁹⁻³⁰; 13, 14

A. For the Teacher

1. The narrative from this point may be roughly divided into three parts, (1) the first journey, with the visits to the Galatian Churches. Here one feature is the opposition of the Jews, and the question at issue is whether converts needed to become Jews in order to be Christians (the question of circumcision); (2) The second journey, Macedonia and Greece. Here the opposition is largely Gentile, from men whose interests were threatened. Here also we see illustrated the attitude of Rome to the religions of subject races. (3) The appeal of Paul to the Emperor, and the events round about it culminating in Rome.

2. The immense significance of the step taken in sending out the mission is made clear in the narrative (13¹⁻⁴). This decision is another instance of the fulfilment of Christ's promise of guidance by His Spirit. At every point, when the Church is taking great decisions which are to determine the future of the world, the leading of the Spirit is emphasized. The dates are generally agreed to be as follows: A.D. 43, Saul is brought from Tarsus by Barnabas (Ramsay); A.D. 47-49, the first missionary journey.

3. *Antioch* (Syrian Antioch). This city, which now appears in the story, was "the second great metropolis of the Church and the mother of Gentile Christianity. It was a very great city, the seat of the imperial legate

of the Roman province of Syria and Cilicia. Syrian, Greek, Jew and Roman all met there ; and in reaching Antioch, Christianity came into the full stream of the life of the Empire ” (Blunt). Notice that the centre of Christian activity is now shifted from Jerusalem to Antioch, since the Gospel is becoming a message to mankind and not to Jews only.

4. The visits to Jerusalem. These visits have given rise to endless debate. The facts are as follows. According to Acts Paul visited Jerusalem between his conversion and the “ Council of Jerusalem ” (Acts 15) on the following occasions : (1) when he escaped from Damascus and was brought to the apostles by Barnabas (Acts 9²⁶⁻³⁰). (2) When the prophet Agabus predicted a famine, and the relief for the poor was taken to Jerusalem by Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11²⁸⁻³⁰; 12²⁵). (3) After their success in converting the Gentiles Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to discuss the terms of admission (Acts 15).

In his letter to the Galatians Paul mentions two visits. (1) Three years after his conversion, when he saw only Peter and James (Gal. 1¹⁷⁻¹⁸). (2) Fourteen years later, owing to a revelation, he went with Barnabas. On this occasion there was a controversy about circumcision which was ended by a cordial agreement.

The question is which of the visits in Acts and Galatians correspond ? Ramsay holds that the second visit of Galatians was the same as the second visit of Acts. Most scholars, however, identify visit (2) of Galatians and visit (3) of Acts. The point is of interest, but it is not worth spending much time or labour on with a class.

5. Saul, otherwise Paul. In Cyprus, in the hall of the

Governor, we find suddenly Saul's name changed to Paul, and Paul it is thereafter. We also notice that, whereas before this it had been "Barnabas and Saul," now it is "Paul and Barnabas." These facts are significant. (1) An inhabitant of Syria and other lands had generally two names, his native name and a Greek name. The former he used when he was among his own people, the latter when he was on a more public stage or in Greek surroundings. In Paul's case he has hitherto been among Jews and we have heard only his Hebrew name. But now he is in different surroundings, and he is inaugurating a policy of a universal character, so that his Greek name becomes natural and appropriate. The change in the use of his names marks the critical departure he is making in the policy of the Church, a Gentile name for an apostle of the Gentiles. (2) The change of name marks also a change in Paul's position in the mission. Hitherto Barnabas has been the leading spirit. Paul now steps forward and takes the position of authority. Hence the formula "Paul and Barnabas." That Barnabas submitted to this is one of the facts which show what a fine nature he possessed.

6. *The Miracles in Acts.* It may be useful at this point to quote two or three sentences on the remarkable occurrences which are narrated by Luke, such as the healing of the cripple at Lystra. First, from Ramsay (*St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 87): "That Paul believed himself to be the recipient of direct revelations from God, to be guided and controlled in his plans by direct interposition of the Holy Spirit, to be enabled by the divine power to move the forces of nature in a way that ordinary men cannot, is involved in the narrative. You must make up your minds to accept or to reject it; but you cannot cut out the marvellous from the rest,

nor can you believe that either Paul or this writer was a mere victim of hallucinations.” Also these sentences from Sir Oliver Lodge (*Science and Human Progress*, p. 120) : “ As far as I can judge, the progress of science is tending towards a strengthening of theology in all its really vital aspects ; and that certain narratives which have been doubted—I shall be understood by many if I cite as examples the divine voice at the Baptism, the Presences at the Transfiguration, the vision on the road to Damascus—were true happenings. True, that is, not merely because of historical evidence . . . but because things like that *can* happen.”

B. Notes

Chapter xi. 26. *Christians*. In the New Testament only here, in Acts 26²⁸ and in 1 Peter 4¹⁶. The name given either by Roman officials (Blunt) or as a piece of popular slang from the Greeks : “ the folk connected with Christos.”

Verse 27. *Prophets*. Often in the New Testament. Ranked next to apostles. Prophecy was a personal gift and was recognized by the believers when they found it.

Chapter xiii. 2. *ministered* : a solemn act of worship in full view of an important step.

Verse 3. *they* : i.e. the Church.

laid hands : not an ordination to apostleship. The two were apostles already.

sent them away : rather “ bade them God-speed.”

Verse 7. *deputy* : R.V. “ Proconsul.” Luke’s accuracy in these matters is remarkable. Cyprus at this time was a Senatorial Province, and these provinces were governed by a proconsul. But this had only happened a few years before Paul’s visit, before

which Cyprus had been an Imperial province, and the designation of the governor would have been different.

Verse 8. *Elymas* : another name of Bar-Jesus meaning “wise.”

Verse 12. The story illustrates the friendly attitude of Roman governors.

Verse 13. *Paul and his company*. Note, others there besides Barnabas and Mark.

Verse 15. See a parallel in St. Luke 4¹⁶.

Verse 16. *ye that fear God* : i.e. Proselytes, adherents of Judaism, but not Jews. Often called “God fearers” (see Acts 10²). ¹

Verse 48. *ordained* : i.e. ready or disposed, no idea of predestination here.

Verse 49. Indicates a stay of some months.

Verse 50. *chief men* : probably magistrates.

Chapter xiv. 1. *together* : better “in the same way” (i.e. as at Antioch). Paul still began at the Synagogue.

Verse 3. *elders*. This was the order of officials in all the churches Paul founded. These congregations were ruled by elders, who were probably chosen by the people and ordained by the apostles.

C. *The Lesson*

1. We have now come to a very important point in the history of our religion, when one of its greatest leaders and teachers (Paul) saw that it must be a catholic (universal) religion, and that his duty was to preach the Gospel to all mankind without any respect to race or religion. This new stage is introduced by

the story of what happened at Antioch. Where Antioch was. Its greatness. Visit of some Christian evangelists to Antioch. They preach to "Greeks," i.e. Gentiles. Great success. Naturally the apostles at Jerusalem are disturbed. What does it mean? They send Barnabas to report. The best man for the task. A splendid character. He goes to Antioch, sees the work and approves of it.

Then Barnabas looks round for help in this great work. "Saul," he says. Why? He probably knew Saul's mind. What had Saul been doing? He was in Tarsus and had been there for ten years, of which we know nothing. Ten years since he was sent safely away from Jerusalem (Acts 9³⁰). Probably he had been preaching in his native Cilicia, but we do not know.

2. *The Start (13¹⁻³).* The five teachers and prophets in Antioch. A kind of "committee of five," who directed and ruled the congregation there. There was no apostle at Antioch, and no single leader. The Church was at an early stage of organization. Probably the new step to be taken was urged by Saul. At any rate, solemn services of worship were held, and prayer made for guidance. Result, the great decision to send out a mission which was destined to be a mission to the whole world. Emphasize the Spirit's guidance at this point. It was *God's* decision really. Barnabas and Saul the missionaries, with other helpers, Mark as their "assistant," probably secretary and manager. Who Mark was. His mother a leading Christian in Jerusalem (Acts 12¹²⁻¹⁷). Possibly Mark was the young man of St. Mark 14^{51, 52}. About thirty-five years of age (about ten years younger than Saul). These men sent away with a solemn "God-speed." The first great Christian Mission.

3. *Cyprus* (13⁴⁻¹³). They sailed from Seleucia, the port of Antioch, and made for Cyprus first. Why? Barnabas was a native of Cyprus (Acts 4³⁶). Many Jews and Christians there. Also Cyprus was on their way. They landed at Salamis, eastern port of Cyprus, and preached; made their way steadily, preaching, to the west end of the island, to the chief city, Paphos. The governor, Sergius Paulus, a cultured man and a religious man, interested in this new Gospel, invited the missionaries to court. Their preaching produced a deep impression on him.

The opposition of Bar-Jesus or Elymas. Why? He was a sorcerer. Why so many sorcerers at this time? Religious belief was gone. Earnest minds wished to know about the Unseen and the future, and these "wise" men professed to be able to tell this. Elymas saw a rival in Barnabas and Saul. His influence at court would be gone. Here the Gospel is up against superstition, as so often (Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller*, Chapter IV, gives a good account of this type of Eastern religion). Tell the story of Paul's encounter with Elymas. No one need feel any doubt about the infliction of blindness. "We are told that witch doctors in African villages possess similar powers, which depend for their working on the belief of their victims" (Wood).

The two incidents, then, of moment in Cyprus were the conversion of the Governor and the blinding of the sorcerer, which really illustrate the treatment of the Christian missionaries by Roman authorities, and the encounter of Christianity with the widespread and influential superstition of the time.

From this time, also, Saul is given his Greek name, Paul and he takes the first place in the mission.

LII. THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY *(continued)*

4. *Asia Minor.* Sailing from Paphos the party came to Perga in Pamphylia. Here Mark left them and went home. Why? Probably there was a change of plan at this point. The original plan was to go along the coast westwards. Why the decision to go up into Galatia? Probably an illness of Paul's, Ramsay thinks an attack of malaria. In Galatians 4¹³ Paul says it was an illness that first took him to the Galatian churches. Mark may have disapproved of the change of route, and Paul's anger at his desertion was due partly to the thought that Mark had deserted them at such a time of need. The decision to go up to Galatia was due to its being high up, with pure fresh air. The route was very dangerous from robbers and flooded rivers. It may be added that Ramsay thinks malaria was Paul's "thorn in the flesh" because of the severe headache that accompanied it, and that it came to him now (2 Cor. 12⁷).

In passing up into Galatia Paul came into quite different surroundings, from a Jewish region to a region which was mainly Gentile, though there were many Jews in the towns.

5. *Pisidian Antioch.* The first town visited, 3,600 feet above the sea. The appearance of the missionaries in the synagogue. The service (cf. Luke 4¹⁶⁻³⁰). Paul's speech. Notice the nature of Paul's speeches in Acts. They were of two kinds; one kind to Jews (here), another to Gentiles (at Lystra and at Athens). This is a specimen of his way of speaking to a Jewish audience. Note these points: (1) the appeal to history always,

(2) Christ the fulfilment of the Old Testament, (3) the Resurrection of Christ the main point, which proved His divine power to forgive. Note also that this was well received. These Jews had no objection to the preaching of the Resurrection. They were far from Jerusalem, and probably not strict.

But the trouble began the following Sabbath when Paul declared the universal aim of the Gospel (13^{44 ff.}). This brought a crisis. Fierce opposition. Paul's clear announcement that they turned to the Gentiles. This was the real beginning of Paul's career. A church for the Gentiles ! The tremendous consequences of this action, the creation of a Gentile Christianity that was to spread throughout the world. "The Jews, and even the Jewish believers in Jesus, realized the danger, hence the bitterness with which they pursued Paul to the end of his life" (Foakes-Jackson). The missionaries driven out of Antioch.

6. *Iconium* (14^{1 ff.}), 90 miles from Antioch. Do you realize how much arduous travelling is implied in these simple statements ? Here there was a great deal of success. A considerable stay. The Jewish element followed from Antioch, or sent messages. Hence division in the population. A riot was the result, in which the missionaries were driven out. The Iconium visit is interesting because of an old story told in an old book, *The Acts of Paul and Thekla*, about the apostle. In it there is a description of Paul which may be genuine. "A man small in size, with meeting eyebrows, with rather a large nose, bald-headed, bow-legged, strongly built, full of grace, for at times he looked like a man, and at times he had the face of an angel." This explains two things : (1) that his opponents called his bodily presence contemptible,

and (2) that he always made a deep impression on everybody.

7. *Lystra* (14^{6 ff.}), 18 miles from Iconium. The miracle on the lame man. Its amazing result. "The gods have come down." Note that Lystra was the scene of the famous story in Ovid. Jupiter (father of the gods) and Mercury (their messenger) had visited Lystra, and the only people to receive them kindly were an old couple, Philemon and Baucis, who were rewarded by being allowed to die at the same time. This legend was familiar to all the people. Hence the idea that Barnabas (the dignified, tall man) and Paul (the speaker) were Jupiter and Mercury come again. The attempted sacrifice at the Temple outside the gates. Paul's horror. His speech (note how different from that at Antioch). The fickle mob turning on the apostles. The stoning of Paul (2 Cor. 11²⁵: "Once was I stoned"). The change in the mob due to Jewish agitations from Antioch and Iconium (19, 20).

8. *Coming home* (14^{20 ff.}). No incident is recorded of Derbe. At this point the party returned by the route they had come. A very plucky thing to do. They were not interfered with, but we are told an important fact, that Paul organized the churches (14²³), appointing elders in them all. All Paul's churches had elders set over them to rule and oversee them. This measure was taken from the Jewish synagogue (e.g. Phil. 1¹ and Titus 1⁵⁻⁷). These elders are sometimes called "bishops" (Acts 20¹⁷), because "bishop" means overseer. At last the great step had been taken, and the Christian Church formed on the basis of faith in Christ, and nothing else. The apostles when they returned (notice, to Syrian Antioch, not Jerusalem) informed the

Church there of all that had happened. This caused great joy.

9. *Providence.* The great lesson of this tour is the way in which the Church, and the apostles were led on from step to step, by the guiding hand of God. Dr. Foakes-Jackson says of Paul that "even his genius can hardly have appreciated the tremendous consequences of his action." They were led, and they did not see the next step till God showed them it. They were really driven to their great decisions. It is encouraging to see this so plainly, because it is one of the most wonderful truths of life. We see it in the story of Israel. We see it in the life of Florence Nightingale, or in any great life like Livingstone's. Robert Louis Stevenson says that he was like a well-handled ship that came about because it was steered by the Great Captain, God. In this truth is our peace and strength.

Expression Work. 1. Draw a map of the first journey. 2. Find out all that is said of Barnabas and sketch his character. 3. In Paul's account of his sufferings in 2 Corinthians 11²³⁻²⁸, which items may have referred to this journey? 4. Contrast the speeches of Paul to Jews and Gentiles. What differences are there?

LIII. THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

1. *Who were the Galatians?* It is now very generally (but not unanimously) agreed that the Galatian churches to which the letter was written were the churches Paul visited on his first journey. They were in the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia. These southern cities were, politically and commercially, the most

important part of the province, as they were well provided with roads. The “Galatians” were Gauls, nomad Celtic tribes that overran Europe in the fourth and third centuries B.C., and settled in large numbers in Asia Minor. “Galatians” is the only word that would embrace at once the people of Pisidian Antioch, of Iconium, of Lystra and Derbe (Wood, p. 65). The arguments that decide for these churches as the churches of Paul’s letter may be found in Ramsay’s *St. Paul the Traveller* and Wood’s *Life, Letters and Religion of St. Paul*.

2. *The Occasion of the Letter.* When a Jew accepted Christ he would still feel that, as a Jew, he was bound to fulfil the precepts of the Law. But he might also feel that the same obligation rested on any who became Christians. It seemed to him wrong that anyone should believe in the Messiah and not observe the Law of God. These orthodox Jewish Christians were willing to have Gentiles admitted to the Christian faith, but they must conform to the precepts of a Law which was imposed by God.

When, therefore, visitors from Galatia to the feasts at Jerusalem brought word of the immense innovation Paul and Barnabas had made in admitting Gentiles to the Church without any reference to the Law and without circumcision, these orthodox Jewish Christians at headquarters were furious. They agreed with the non-Christian Jews that this was intolerable. And they at once sent emissaries into the churches which Paul had founded in Galatia who tried to persuade the new converts that they must enter the Christian Church by the Jewish gate, i.e. they must become Jews in order to be Christians. And they pleaded that this was the view of the apostles. They asserted that Paul was an

interloper, with no authority, and that his message had no weight. When Paul heard of this at Antioch he was very angry, and at once wrote this letter in the heat of his indignation.

Paul knew that he had his message directly from God, that his conversion was not due to man, that he owed nothing to anyone but Christ, that he was an apostle as really as Peter or James. He believed that God had given him his work to do, and the Spirit to be his guide. He was firmly convinced that his message was to Jew and Gentile alike, and that the *only* condition of admission to the Church was faith in Christ. The barrier which Jews had set up between themselves and the rest of the world must be thrown down. Jews and Gentiles who accepted Christ were one body. The Law could not save a soul. Nothing could save but Christ.

3. *The Message of the Letter.* This was the substance of the letter Paul wrote at once (early in A.D. 50) when he heard the news of the attempt to seduce his converts. The message may be put in various ways. Paul writes in this letter in ways that do not appeal to us, and uses arguments that would interest and convince his readers, but do not interest or convince us. But what he says is all-important. His message is that Christianity is just Christ. What makes a Christian is faith in Christ. The Christian experience is an experience of friendship with Christ. And our religion is one of freedom. We are not bound down by laws and ceremonies. These things are of less importance than faith. The Law was good for its own time, but the essence of the Law is just love. And those who have Christ for a Friend learn love from Him. This is the meaning of all the phrases Paul uses, "justification," "redemption,"

“salvation.” They all mean nothing but trust in Christ as the way to know God.

4. *Personal Parts of the Letter.* The most interesting things in the letter are the personal revelations in it. (1) Chapters 1 and 2 are almost all autobiographical. The account of his conversion and religious life in chapter 1 is fascinating. It shows that Paul got his Gospel from no one but Christ Himself. It also contains one of our strongest proofs of the Resurrection of Christ as a fact of history. Then there is the account of his two visits to Jerusalem, first three years after his conversion, and secondly in A.D. 45 at the time of the famine (Acts 11³⁰ and 12²⁵). Then the episode of Titus whom Paul refused to have circumcized. Then the statement that between A.D. 32 and 43 Paul was preaching in Syria and Cilicia. All this adds to our knowledge of Paul. (2) The references to the occasion of his preaching first to them (iv¹³ ff.), probably owing to an attack of malaria. (3) The description of Paul’s own handwriting, and the fact that his letters were all dictated. He only added a bit in his own hand at the close, which was the sign of genuineness in every letter. “See in how large letters I have written to you with mine own hand” (6¹¹). Was he short-sighted, as Farrar suggests? (4) The reference to his sufferings during this tour, in 6¹⁷, “Do not give me trouble! Remember what I have suffered for you. I bear in my body the brand-marks of Jesus” (these were marks branded on runaway slaves). He was stoned at Lystra, and probably scourged in other places (2 Cor. 11^{24, 25}).

5. *Summary of the Letter.* It has two parts, first the historical part (chapters 1 and 2), and secondly the message Paul sends to his converts (chapters 3 to 6).

The first part has already been briefly described. It is an account of Paul's religious experience given to show that he was independent of the other apostles, and that his "Gospel" was his by inspiration and not from men. Having established this, Paul goes on to present his Gospel and commend it on its merits. A good deal of this is dead to us. Paul's arguments are sometimes "rabbinic"; the kind of arguments used in Jewish Colleges. But the substance is really Paul's Gospel and as true to-day as it was then. Part Two then contains the following points : (1) The Spirit of Christ is received not by the Law but by faith (3¹⁻¹⁰) ; (2) Righteous living is by faith (3¹¹⁻¹⁴) ; (3) God's Promise came by Abraham long before the Law was in existence ; (4) The Law was only an episode (3¹⁵⁻²⁵) ; (5) Nothing can hinder the unity of all believers in Christ (3²⁶⁻⁴²⁰) ; (6) Christ means freedom from all outward tyrannies (4²¹⁻³¹) ; (7) The soul of the Law is love, which is the creation of Christ (5) ; (8) The practical counsels that follow (6).

Expression Work. Find out all the parts of this letter that interest you and try to put them in your own words.

LIV. THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM

A CATHOLIC FAITH

ACTS 15

A. For the Teacher

1. The 15th of Acts is a critical point in the story. Everything has been leading up to it, and then after it

we begin a new period. This has been put as follows. Up to this chapter the subject has been the *expansion* of the Church, thereafter we have the *extension* of the Church. That is to say, we have seen Christianity broadening out from a small sect within the Jewish Faith until it becomes a world-wide message. Then, when that is clear (as it is in chapter 15), we have the ministry of Paul who carries the message far and wide. Hence the great importance of this Council. Its date is early in A.D. 50.

2. The Council was held because a crisis had arisen in the Church. We saw how Stephen had plainly perceived that the Gospel was for the world. Then came Peter's experience at Samaria (8). Then Philip's baptism of the Ethiopian. Then Peter's baptism of Cornelius. But all these were cases of people who were already adherents of Judaism. The church at Jerusalem had acquiesced in their admission. But they had not been ready to draw the conclusion that the Gospel was for all, or to admit the Gentiles as on equality with the Jews. And now came the work of Paul and Barnabas who had organized churches of Gentiles, and had admitted them to the Church without the rite of circumcision. Jewish Christians from Jerusalem went to Syrian Antioch and found the same thing there. There was evidently a hot discussion, and it was resolved that a deputation with Paul and Barnabas at its head should go to the Mother Church and have the question finally decided. Thus was held the Conference which decided the fate of the world.

3. *The Decrees.* The decision of the Council was embodied in a series of resolutions called "the decrees." What were they? The decision was that the Gentiles

should be admitted freely to the Church without any Jewish rite, but that they should be asked to refrain from four things. These things were : (1) things sacrificed to idols ; (2) things strangled ; (3) " blood " (as food) ; and (4) moral impurity. Why these four ? Because all four were practised in Gentile idolatrous worship, and were therefore hateful to Jews. Why did Paul agree to this ? Because otherwise there could be no fellowship between Jew and Gentile, and his object was to remove all hindrances to the union of Jew and Gentile in the Church. And so the " decrees " were a compromise. The main point had been gained, and the conditions could be allowed to work out in practice successfully, as they did.

4. *The Result.* Acts gives the impression that the controversy was ended by the Council. But that was by no means the case. It was a prolonged and bitter dispute, and Paul had to fight hard against the party that still tried to hinder and obstruct his work. The matter was settled officially by the Council, and that was a great gain. But the " Judaizers," as they were called, did not give way. They remained apart for a long time, and finally died out as a heretical sect in the fourth century.

B. Notes

Verse 2. *certain others.* Perhaps including Luke, who seems to give a first-hand account of the Council.

Verse 3. Judæan churches not mentioned, no joy in them over Paul's work !

Verse 4. Points to a public assembly.

Verse 6. *came together* : a second meeting after private conferences.

Verse 12. *Barnabas and Paul.* The old order, on Jewish soil.

Verse 13. *James:* the Lord's brother.

Verse 20. *blood:* see Leviticus 3¹⁷; 17¹⁰⁻¹⁶.

Verse 21. This is the reason for the prohibitions, because there were Jews wherever the Gospel would go.

Verse 22. Judas possibly from the orthodox Jewish Christians, Silas from the broader Hellenistic section.

Verse 23. *Antioch, Syria and Cilicia.* To them, because in them there was a mixture of Jews and Gentiles, whereas the Galatian churches were Gentile.

Verse 24. Note the definite repudiation of the extreme section.

Verse 31. *consolation:* better “exhortation.”

C. *The Lesson*

Introduction. No sooner was “Galatians” written than the same trouble arose in Syrian Antioch itself! Some very strict Jewish Christians came down from Judæa, and insisted that all converts should become Jews before they could become members of the Church. Keen discussion followed. A deputation to the Church at Jerusalem was appointed to have the question settled. Paul and Barnabas were at the head of it. Their journey. Rejoicing everywhere they went at their news, except in Judæa (3).

1. *The Meeting to hear the Deputation* (4, 5). Paul and Barnabas state their case. Opposition from a new quarter, Pharisees who had been recently converted to Christianity (5). These were very strict, and entirely

opposed to Paul. The question at issue (state it clearly); not “could Gentiles be saved?” All were agreed on this. But “*how* saved?” through Jewish door? or a door open to all? Paul’s view the latter.

2. *The Second Meeting.* Much talk and private conferences. Then a further meeting to decide. At this meeting there was first of all a general discussion. Then Peter’s speech, in which he told simply how he had been led to take a broad view (7-11). Then Paul and Barnabas gave an account of their labours to a quiet and fascinated audience. Then James, as president, summed up and gave the decision of the Council (13-21). James the Lord’s brother, and therefore carried great weight. He found a reason for the broader view in prophecy (Amos 9¹¹⁻¹²), stated their judgment that the Church was to be free to the Gentiles on the ground of their faith alone, and ended by giving certain recommendations to the Gentiles. They were to keep from four things which would have prevented Jews living with them. (See under *A.*)

3. This was a great victory for the Gospel. The four prohibitions were not really a burden, because they made the way open to Jews and Gentiles to live and worship together. Gradually the need for them disappeared. But at the time they were a real means of union in the Church. That was Paul’s motive in agreeing to them. The main point is that this Council opened the Christian Church to all the world without any conditions but faith in Christ. This was the greatest decision the Church has ever taken and determined the whole future.

4. *The Real Meaning of the Council’s Decision.* We must fix our minds on two things: (1) The decision of

the Council abolished all barriers to loving fellowship in the Church. Jew and Gentile were to be on the same level. There was to be no racial bar. All exclusiveness was gone, at least in theory. And if the Church had always acted on this principle we should have real loving fellowship among all Christians. But new barriers were always raised up. The Church of Rome unchurches all others. One Church denies that another is a proper Church. There is caste (explain), social pride, people looking down on others. And, finally, the barrier wealth raises, rich and poor, suspicious or contemptuous or envious. Always barriers are raised up by our sinful hearts. The evil of all this. The great truth of this Council, "all one in Christ Jesus." Christ's teaching about brotherhood and love. This is the real meaning of the Council's judgment. (2) Another great truth in this incident is the necessity and duty of missionary work. If the "Judaizers" had triumphed what would have happened? The Christian Church would have died out, like a stream in the sands. And we would never have heard of Christ! There are people who say, "Leave China and India alone. They have their own religions. Good enough for them. Let us evangelize our own land. We have enough to do," and so on. But suppose the Church had said that in Paul's time? "Let us keep to Palestine. Christ was meant for us." That is what they did say. And Paul said, "No! Christ is for the world." The truth is that if Christ is not for the whole world He is not a big enough Christ for me. Hence the truth that is behind Foreign Missions, that if Christ is not for the world then the Gospel is not God's message for man, and we may put the New Testament on the fire with other "back numbers."

Expression Work. 1. State the case on both sides of the great controversy. 2. Trace the steps by which the Church reached its tremendous decision at the Council.

LV. PAUL AND BARNABAS

THE SECOND CHANCE

ACTS 15³⁶⁻⁴¹

A. For the Teacher

The teacher may feel that this episode deserves a lesson to itself because of its subject. It may also be a little relief from the larger topics in this section. And in any case, this incident gives the teacher a fine opportunity for stating a great Christian principle.

B. Notes

Verse 39. Cyprus was the native country of Barnabas. Tradition says he stayed there. He disappears from history at this point.

Verse 40. *Silas*, or Silvanus as he is called elsewhere (1 Thess. 1¹; 2 Cor. 1¹⁹). Paul's constant companion in the second journey. He replaced Barnabas, not Mark. Mark's place was taken by Timothy. Paul asked Silas probably because of the qualities he had shown already at Antioch.

C. The Lesson

1. We have heard much of two great and good men, Barnabas and Paul. Paul was great, but so was Barnabas. His generosity (Acts 4³⁶⁻³⁷), his helpfulness (Acts 11²²⁻²⁶), his humility (in taking the second place), his

fine character (Acts 11²⁴). One of the finest characters in the New Testament. Sad to find two such men quarrelling ! Nothing so frequent as such quarrels. Robert Louis Stevenson tells of two sisters who lived in one room. They put a chalk line down the middle, and each kept to her half. They never spoke. Also of two nuns. They had quarrelled and each had taken the veil because of this quarrel, unknown to the other. One of them discovered this on the death of the other in the same nunnery. Quarrels between nations, classes, individuals.

2. Notice that in such a quarrel there are two sides. Paul's side. "We cannot take Mark, because he deserted us before, and the Cause of the Gospel is too great to be risked in such a way." A good case. Barnabas' side. "Let us give Mark another chance. He is anxious to come, and I will vouch for him." Both had a principle to fight for. Both were determined, and so they separated.

3. Which was right ? We know now that Barnabas was right. Why ? He gave Mark a second chance, and Mark took it, and became a very useful member of the Church. Later Paul recognized this and asked for Mark to be sent to him, for he had found him "profitable for service" (2 Tim. 4¹¹). Later, Mark accompanied Peter and worked with him (1 Peter 5¹³). Tradition says he acted as Peter's assistant, and that the Gospel which he wrote was largely composed of Peter's recollections. That is a good record, and all due to the generous confidence of Barnabas. This is the power that trust in anyone exercises. The boys at Rugby said it was a shame to tell Dr. Arnold a lie, because he always trusted them.

4. This shows the virtue of the Second Chance. Give a man a second chance and he will very likely recover himself. That is what Christ did with Peter. Remember the result. But it is what God does with us. What is forgiveness but a second chance? We spoil our lives by sin, and God gives them back to us clean and fresh, and says to us, "Here is your life again. Make a fresh start and do better." That is forgiveness, and it is the essence of the Gospel. And that is the meaning of this incident in Paul's life. He was a great man, but he was wrong here. Barnabas was truer to the spirit of his Master.

LVI. THE SECOND JOURNEY

PHILIPPI. SALVATION

ACTS 16

A. For the Teacher

1. The Emperor Augustus made Philippi a "colony" when he founded it. A "colony" in the Roman sense meant a settlement of ex-service men. These colonies were scattered through the empire, and were each a little bit of Rome in a foreign land. They had complete self-government, taxed themselves, and coined their own money. Their citizens had all the rights of a citizen of Rome. That meant a great deal, among other things that they could not be scourged. Paul and Silas were scourged at Philippi, probably because the magistrates acted hastily, and (as Paul says), "without investigation." These colonies were very proud of their privileges, and very loyal to the empire.

2. The charge against Paul and Silas was that they were causing trouble in the town by introducing customs not permitted by Roman law. That meant they were introducing an illegal religion. Rome gave religious liberty, but religions were not allowed to proselytize. Paul was turning the natives from their own religion. He was an evangelist of a strange faith. That was his offence. And the magistrates were anxious to discourage any such practice.

3. The visit to Philippi is as good an occasion as any for us to note Paul's method of work. His plan of campaign was as follows : (1) He fixed on an important centre. He had a "strategic eye" for these critical and influential places. For some time he settled at one of these places until he had established a source of propaganda, a church strong enough for this. (2) He generally began at the local synagogue, and taught there until the Jews came to the end of their patience. (3) He then turned to the Gentiles, usually taking with him the Proselytes, or "God-fearers," whom he had won at the synagogue, and with these as a nucleus he set up a separate meeting-place, in a house or a hired hall. (4) He supported himself all the time by tent-making. (5) He then organized his converts into "churches," with a set of officials who were called "Elders" (or "Bishops") and deacons. The model of his churches was the Synagogue, and perhaps partly the trade guilds of the empire. (6) When he left the district he kept in touch with his converts by means of letters, some of which we possess, and by means of deputies whom he appointed, like Timothy and Titus. (7) But as often as he could he revisited these churches in order to encourage and strengthen them. (This summary is taken from *Paul the Missionary*, by Ernest Hayes, 1s. net).

4. There are different ways of looking at the events in this section. We might take Philippi as an example of the new enemy Christianity now met, viz. vested interests (cf. the events at Ephesus later). Or we might take it as an example of how Christ meets all kinds of human need (Lydia, the fortune-teller, and the jailor). Or we might emphasize the fact that now Paul is setting out on a stupendous adventure (like Abraham). Or we may take the climax of the story, and regard the new mission as an answer to the jailor's question, "What must I do to be saved?" Any of the four is a sound interpretation. The last is chosen because, in point of fact, this is the broad meaning of Paul's adventure.

B. Notes

Verse 1. Derbe first, because they came by and through the "Cilician Gates." Timothy was circumcized because he was the son of a Jewess. They would lodge with Jews, and Timothy would be a real hindrance in such circumstances unless he was acceptable to Jews. If he had been a Gentile it would have been different. Timothy was probably a convert of the first journey. The constant companion of Paul for the rest of his life.

Verses 6, 7. *Region of Phrygia and Galatia*: i.e. South Galatia. Hence a second visit to the Galatian churches.

Verse 7. *The Spirit*: R.V. "The Spirit of Jesus", a unique phrase in the New Testament.

Verse 9. *Man of Macedonia*. Ramsay suggests Luke. This is very improbable. But see a suggestive chapter in *The Hidden Romance of the New Testament*, by Professor Robertson.

Verse 10. Notice the “we.” This is the beginning of the “we” passages. They show that Luke joined Paul at this point.

Verse 11. *Samothrace* : an island half-way across to the mainland of Macedonia.

Verse 12. *Philippi* : a good centre, because a meeting-place of east and west.

Verse 13. *where prayer was*, etc. : R.V. “where we supposed there was a place of prayer.” No synagogue in Philippi, only an enclosed place with open roof.

Verse 14. *Lydia* : a proselyte, named from the place in Asia, Lydia, where her wares were made.

Verse 15. *household* : a common practice in the mission.

Verse 16. *a spirit of divination* : literally “a spirit, a Python.” Python was the name of a prophetess of Apollo, a fortune-teller.

Verse 17. *Most High God* : a common pagan phrase.

Verse 21. See under *A*.

Verse 22. *rent their clothes* : R.V. “rent their garments off them,” i.e. those of Paul and Silas.

Verse 23. *jailor* : probably governor of the prison.

Verse 24. *inner prison* : underground, stocks fastened to the wall.

Verse 26. *earthquake* : common in the East. The doors fastened in a flimsy way.

Verse 27. A jailor who let prisoners escape was punished severely, as well as disgraced.

Verse 37. *uncondemned* : i.e. “without investigation.”

C. *The Lesson*

1. When Paul and Barnabas separated Paul chose Silas to go with him instead. Probably because he was one of the early disciples, because he was a leading official of the church in Jerusalem, a Roman citizen (16³⁷) and one of the two whom the apostles had chosen to carry the "decrees" to the churches. This time they did not go by sea, but through the great mountain chain, by land, and through the narrow pass called the "Cilician Gates." Alexander the Great had led his army through this pass on his way to the East, and Crusaders called it the "gates of Judas" because of its dangers. Once through, the small company visited the churches of Galatia, going over the old ground (1-5). In Lystra Paul picked up Timothy, who was to be his close companion for the rest of his life.

2. *On to Troas* (6-10). Whither now? Paul wanted to preach in Asia (see map), and especially in Ephesus. But he was prevented by some form of divine guidance. Then he turned north to Bithynia, but again he was stopped. Paul had apparently intended to be the missionary of Asia Minor, at least at first, but he was driven on along the trade route to Troas. At Troas he had the wonderful dream of a Macedonian calling him to go over to Europe. Who? Probably the sight of Macedonian sailors in the harbour had occasioned the dream. At any rate he took this for a divine summons, as indeed it was. At this point we find in the story suddenly "we" instead of "they." This means that Luke had joined the party at Troas and travelled with them. So what we have now is the description of an eye-witness, at least for a time.

3. *To Europe.* They sailed across by Samothrace,

which is an island half-way over. The voyage took two days. They landed at Neapolis, which is the port of Philippi. Bring out clearly that this was a momentous step, a great adventure, the invasion of Europe by the Gospel. Something like Abraham leaving Ur, or Columbus sailing for America, or Livingstone going to Africa. One of the great events of history.

4. At Philippi (11-40). Philippi, Luke tells us, was the first city of the district. Not the capital, that was Amphipolis. But Philippi thought itself the first, as Glasgow thinks itself the first city of Scotland, though Edinburgh is the capital. Philippi was also a Roman Colony (see under A). It had also a great history. Here was fought the decisive battle between Augustus and Brutus and Cassius. It was called after its founder, Philip of Macedon, and made a Roman colony by Augustus. It was on the great trade route and therefore a notable centre.

(1) First Sabbath in the “Prayer enclosure” at the riverside. There was no synagogue because there were few Jews. Only women were present. The first woman convert in Europe, Lydia, a rich woman who traded in purple garments, dyed with the famous dye of Thyatira. Her hospitality.

(2) *The Conversion of the Fortune-teller.* Supposed to have been inspired by a “demon” and able to tell the future. The prevalence of superstition. She followed the apostles about, repeating words she had heard from them. Paul’s irritation. The “demon” driven out. The result unfortunate. The evangelists accused of preaching an “unlawful religion,” and hastily condemned without investigation, scourged and put in prison. They were probably not listened to and

therefore had no chance of explaining that they were Roman citizens.

(3) *The Jailor.* Bleeding and weak from their terrible experience they were thrust into an underground cell. Bleeding and suffering, yet singing praises to God ! Their splendid spirit. The earthquake (a common occurrence in the East). The jailor's alarm. Saved from suicide by Paul. His question. A likely one, because "salvation" was a great word in the "mystery religions" of the time, and the jailor had probably heard the two preach. They had been a good time in Philippi (18).

(4) *The Release.* The magistrates had probably been uneasy at the thought of their own hasty action, and sent to have the prisoners set free. Paul's refusal. The magistrates' apology. They asked Paul to leave, however, to prevent further disturbances. And Paul agreed. He left Luke behind, probably to act as "elder" of the church which had just been founded.

5. The most important thing that happened at Philippi was the jailor's question and Paul's answer. Because "salvation" was what Lydia and he, and possibly the fortune-teller, had got. And to answer that question was the whole object of Paul's mission. Salvation is just the knowledge of God, which brings happiness, peace, and power to do what is right. And that comes from Jesus Christ, from trusting in Him. Not merely from "believing" with the mind but by trusting Him as a Saviour and Friend. Salvation was a great word of all the religions of that time. And it is the greatest word and the greatest thing, in the world. And Christ alone can give it, because in Christ alone can we find and know God, our Father.

Expression Work. 1. Draw a map of Paul's second journey as far as Philippi. 2. Name the women who were helpers in the early Christian Church. 3. Read the letter to the Philippians, and describe from it the kind of people they were.

LVII. ATHENS

FAILURE

ACTS 17

A. For the Teacher

1. There has been much discussion as to what the "Areopagus" was to which Paul was brought. The A.V. evidently assumed it was Mars Hill. But it is now very generally admitted to be a sort of University Court which had control over lectures, and perhaps over the morals of youth. Paul's appearance before this court was not a trial in a formal sense, but a kind of examination as to his fitness as a public teacher.

2. The Stoics and Epicureans were the two schools of philosophy of most importance in Athens at this time. The Stoics were pantheists, but they had a very high moral ideal. They believed that a man could be self-sufficient and could reach a lofty ethical standard by his own efforts. The school produced some noble characters like the emperor Marcus Aurelius. The Epicureans believed in making the best of the material world, not by vulgar sensual pleasure but by the satisfaction of man's highest and best desires. This creed was liable to abuse, more especially as the school was materialistic and believed that such gods as there are

have no real concern with us. Paul has both schools in view in his speech at Athens. His statement of "natural religion" would interest them. But they would be amused as well as amazed at his assertions about an obscure Jewish teacher, Jesus of Nazareth. There were plenty of lecturers on religion in Athens, but surely none had ever made such statements as this "ugly little Jew."

3. Recent writers all dwell on Luke's extraordinary accuracy in matters of fact. There are some striking instances of this in the present passage. "The narrative," says Ramsay, "never makes a false step amid all the many details, as the scene changes from city to city; and that is a conclusive proof that this is a picture of real life." Conybeare and Howson quote a very remarkable passage from the life of Apollonius of Tyana, who had been educated at Tarsus about the same time as Paul: "Having come to anchor in the Piræus, he went up from the harbour to the city (of Athens). Advancing onward he met several of the philosophers. In his first conversation, finding the Athenians *much devoted to religion* (Paul's very phrase), he discoursed on some subjects. This was at Athens, where also *altars to unknown divinities are set up*" (from Wood's *Life of Paul*). Further, Luke calls the "rulers" of Thessalonica "politarchai." This was thought to be inaccurate, but some time ago an inscription was found on an arch of the ancient city which gives a list of the city rulers and uses exactly Luke's term. And once more, it is known that in Macedonia women had a free and more prominent position than in a town like Athens, and the position Luke assigns to them in the Macedonian cities (Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea) is strictly in accordance with the facts.

4. The Lesson in *C 4* can be put by explaining that the simple and humble can know God, but pride and cleverness are not the way to this knowledge.

B. Notes

Verse 1. "*They*," because Luke did not go. The "we" reappears in 20⁵, six years later.

Thessalonica, 100 miles from Philippi, the Salonica of the Great War.

Verse 4. The mass of the converts were from heathenism as 1 Thessalonians shows (Blunt).

Verse 5. A serious riot. See 1 Thessalonians 2¹⁴⁻¹⁶; 3¹⁻⁵; and 2 Thessalonians 1⁶.

bring them forth: arraign them before the popular Assembly.

Verse 7. Treason. The old charge on which Jesus was condemned trumped up again.

Verse 9. *security*: i.e. for Paul's appearance if called for trial, or else for Paul's departure. Hence the difficulty of Paul's return. If he came back Jason would suffer. Paul calls this "Satanic" (1 Thess. 2¹⁸).

Verse 10. *Berœa*, 40 miles from Thessalonica.

Verse 15. *Silas and Timothy*. Timothy rejoined Paul at Athens (1 Thess. 3^{1, 2}). Probably both did. But he sent Timothy back from there to Thessalonica to see how things were going (1 Thess. 3^{1, 5}), and probably Silas on a similar errand to Berœa. They both rejoined him at Corinth (Acts 18⁵) with heartening news of the condition of the churches.

Verse 17. Paul began at synagogue as usual. But he also discussed in the Agora (market-place) with any one who would talk. This method of public discussion was characteristic of Athenian life.

Verse 18. *babbler*: literally “seedpicker,” slang for one who picked up droppings from a cart, therefore a man with secondhand ideas. Also a suggestion of vulgarity. A good modern equivalent would be “bounder” (Ramsay).

Verse 22. *superstitious*: wrong; “very religious” is better, or “addicted to the worship of gods.”

Verse 23. Several inscriptions have been found on altars to “unknown gods.”

Verse 28. The quotation is from Aratus of Cilicia, Paul’s native province. It may have been a stock quotation, as many of Shakespeare’s are to-day, used by people who have never read Shakespeare.

C. The Lesson

We are continuing the Second Journey. When Paul left Philippi he travelled along the famous Egnation Road, one of the great highways from east to west. He did not stop at Amphipolis or Apollonia, probably because his policy was to occupy strategic points, centres of influence. His first stay was at

1. *Thessalonica*, a great city, the end, or exit to the sea, of a great land corridor which runs into the Balkan mountains. Hence its strategic importance in the Great War as Salonica. A self-governing city with a popular Assembly. Paul was here some months; he worked to support himself by tent-making (1 Thess. 2⁹). Much success in converts, some Jews, many Greeks and women in numbers. The fury of the Jews because so many of their adherents were taken away from the synagogue. The attack by Jews. Plan to excite the “hooligan” element in the city to attack the apostles, and so throw the blame of “disturbances” on them. The plan miscarried because (1) the apostles were

absent when the attack was made on Jason's house, and (2) the magistrates were not so easily hoodwinked as those at Philippi. Notice the charge made—treason, as in the case of Jesus. The decision of the magistrates, however, that Jason should find "security" (probably for Paul's leaving the city) made it impossible for Paul to stay or return, as Jason would have suffered. So Paul left.

2. *Beræa* (¹⁰⁻¹⁵). Two points in the story here. The Jews were more open-minded than elsewhere. And the usual invasion of the persecuting Jews from the last place the apostles had visited! Silas and Timothy left behind to organize the work. They were to rejoin him at Athens (see note on verse 15).

3. Athens (¹⁶⁻³⁴). The capital of Greece! Greece was the greatest influence in human thought next to Christianity. Greek art, Greek drama, Greek poetry, Greek philosophy—all unrivalled. The missionary of one great system coming to the centre of the other! Paul was alone in Athens wandering about seeing the sights. So many statues of gods and goddesses. A people "very religious" surely! It was said of Athens of that day that it was easier to find a god than a man. Paul began as usual to preach in the synagogue. But in the Agora also. The wandering lecturer was a familiar sight there. And Paul discussed with everyone who would listen. Soon he met the followers of two famous schools of teaching, the Stoics (who made Duty their watchword) and the Epicureans (who made Pleasure theirs). Paul seemed to them a sort of "bounder," but his message was certainly new. So they brought him to the Court, the Areopagus, that decided whether a lecturer should be allowed to speak publicly.

Paul's wonderful speech. For the first time Paul was before a cultured audience, speaking to the learned. How did he speak? Something like this. "I see you are a very religious people. I see also that you really want to know God. Well, I come to tell you of Him. He is to be seen in *Nature* (²⁴). He can be seen also in Providence, in history (²⁶). But, indeed, He is to be found in ourselves. He is very near us, our Father (^{27, 28}). So much you can all see. But I come with a special message. God is to be seen in One Who is His Son. Whom He raised from the dead, and Who will come to judge the world." A striking speech! One just suited to the audience. But the conclusion of it seemed ridiculous to them. God revealed in an unknown Jewish person. Absurd!

4. *Failure.* Paul failed utterly at Athens. No church was formed. Two converts mentioned by name. A short stay. Why did he fail? (1) Because of the attitude of his audience. Self-satisfied. Paul a "bounder" to them. An absurd Gospel. (2) Because there is no way to God by the mere intellect, see 1 Corinthians 2⁹ 10, 14. No one in this world has ever yet found God by mere reasoning. How do men find Him? Through the heart, i.e. through their sense of need. Look at all the examples in the New Testament, in the Gospels, Paul, Cornelius. Look at Luther, Augustine. Through our sin, our sorrow, our trouble, our weakness God comes to us. The self-sufficiency of the Athens philosophers never reaches God, but the spirit of the child does.

Expression Work. 1. Continue the map of the Second Journey. 2. What is a philosopher? and who were the Stoics and Epicureans?

LVIII. CORINTH

SUCCESS

ACTS 18

A. For the Teacher

1. *Corinth.* The political and commercial capital of Achaea (Greece proper), 50 miles from Athens, due west. It is situated on a narrow neck of land over which ships were dragged on a kind of tramway. The route by sea was dangerous. A canal was projected and has been made in modern times. It was the port of call between the Ægean and Adriatic seas, and a great centre of trade. It was made a “colony” by Julius Cæsar. Like all cosmopolitan places, a hot-bed of vice. The ancient worship of the goddess of love was maintained with immoral rites. A “Corinthian” was an equivalent of a man of bad character. Luke’s historical accuracy is seen here again in the name he gives to the chief magistrate, “Proconsul,” for he had formerly been given another rank, but from A.D. 44 onwards the magistrate was a Proconsul.

2. *Gallio.* The incident of the trial illustrates the policy of Rome towards subject races. They were allowed freedom of worship, and their worship was *protected* so long as it was neither treasonable nor immoral (see Introduction), so that Gallio was only carrying out Rome’s declared attitude in dismissing the charge against Paul since it was *a matter of religion*. Gallio has gone down to posterity with an undeserved reputation for religious indifference, owing to the words of verse 17, “Gallio cared for none of these things.”

They really mean that he did not take any account of them, which was just his plain duty. Gallio was the elder brother of Seneca, and apparently a man of high character, gentle, courteous, and loveable. It was because of this kindly nature that the Jews thought they would "try it on" with the newly appointed governor, with disastrous results to themselves.

3. Professor Ramsay (*St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 260) thinks that "the residence at Corinth was an epoch in Paul's life." He thinks Paul's Gospel here became clearer to him, and that his plan to make Christianity the religion of the world became more definite, helped by Gallio's decision.

B. Notes

Verse 5. *pressed in the Spirit*: "constrained by the Word" (R.V.). Better "absorbed in the Word," i.e. it was a period of intense preaching.

Verse 6. *shook out his raiment*: cf. Nehemiah 5¹³.

Verse 7. *Titus Justus*: a proselyte.

Verse 8. *Crispus*: see 1 Corinthians 1¹⁴.

Verse 12. *Deputy*: "Proconsul" (R.V.). See under A.

Verse 17. *The Greeks*: R.V. has "they," but A.V. is right.

Gallio cared . . . See under A.

Verse 18. *vow*: Why did he take a vow and shave his head? It was a Jewish custom (Num. 6). Paul was "all things to all men," and he wished to conciliate the Jews by showing that he was still a devout Jew. This would make approach to the Jews easier. He did the same thing later (21²⁰⁻²⁷).

C. The Lesson

1. Arrival at Corinth. Describe Corinth (see under *A*). Paul came here in weak health and in depressed spirits. Read 1 Thessalonians 3 (written in Corinth) and 1 Corinthians 2³, which reveal his state of body and mind. Depressed by failure at Athens. Also in this city he was very near starvation (2 Cor. 11⁹) and lonely. One thing he had resolved on, never to speak or argue as he did at Athens with so little result. "When I came to you," he reminds the Corinthian Church, "I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom . . . and I determined not to know anything among you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

2. New Friends. He soon found both employment and friendship with a couple, Aquila and Priscilla. They were from Rome, and had been driven from there by the edict of the Emperor Claudius who tried (unsuccessfully) to clear all the Jews out of Rome. This edict was caused by disturbances "due to the action of Chrestus," says a Latin historian, Suetonius. This was probably a reference to Christian preaching, and probably Aquila and his wife were already Christians when Paul met them. Aquila was, like Paul, a tent-weaver, and Paul worked with him and lived with him.

3. Break with the Synagogue. Silas and Timothy arrived soon, so that Paul was now happier. They brought news which made Paul write the letters to the Thessalonians. Also their arrival marks a period of earnest preaching (⁵). It resulted in the conversion of the chief ruler of the synagogue, Crispus, as well as of a proselyte, Justus. The Jews were naturally angry, and Paul left them with a dramatic gesture. He must have been an exasperating person, because he not only

flouted them, but held his meetings next door to the synagogue ! It was like an employé setting up shop next door to his employer. The work went on with great success for eighteen months, the Church growing steadily.

4. *Before Gallio* (¹²⁻¹⁷). The Jews thought that Gallio's well-known "sweetness" might give them their opportunity, and dragged Paul before him, charging him with teaching an "illicit" or unlawful religion. Describe Gallio (under *A*). Gentle but firm. He dismissed the charge on the ground that Rome took nothing to do with the religion of the people so long as they behaved. And when the mob seized and beat Sosthenes, he probably thought they were meting out a rough justice.

5. *Homewards* (¹⁸⁻²³). Paul now felt the need of a rest, and resolved to return to Antioch. He took Ephesus on his way. He had always had a strong desire to preach there. But at present he could not stay long as he wished to be in Jerusalem for the Passover. His vow and its motive. He left Aquila and his wife at Ephesus, however, as his deputies, and sailed to Cæsarea. From there he went up to Jerusalem to report, and thence back to Antioch. He must have rested there for some time, and then he re-visited the churches of his first missionary journey.

6. *Success*. There is no doubt that Paul's work at Corinth met with immense success. He was there nearly two years, made many friends, and built up a great church. And he tells us the reason in 1 Corinthians 2. He preached Christ quite simply. And Christ, thus preached, won multitudes who needed just what he had to give. "It is the Inward Master that teacheth, and

where this inspiration and sanction are wanting, it is vain that words from without are beaten in" (Augustine). It was because Paul had "beaten in" words to appeal to clever people at Athens that he had failed. When he presented Christ very simply as Saviour he succeeded. The youngest and the simplest and the most learned respond to this Gospel.

Expression Work. 1. Draw a map showing the trading position of Corinth. 2. Why did Paul refuse to accept money from his converts (except the Philippians) and support himself? See 1 Corinthians 4^{11, 12}; 2 Corinthians 11⁹.

LIX. THE LETTERS TO THE THESSALONIANS

1. These letters are undoubtedly by Paul. There was some doubt about the second for a time, but it is generally agreed now that it goes with the first. Dr. Kirsopp Lake says that it "so closely resembles 1 Thessalonians that it is usually conceded to be indisputable that, if it be genuine, it must have been written at the same time as, or immediately after, the former epistle." From the personal references in the letters it is clear they were written at Corinth during the eighteen months he spent there on the second journey. He had recently been at Philippi (1 Thess. 2²), and after that at Athens (3¹) where Silas and Timothy were with him (1¹). Timothy had been sent from Athens to visit the Church at Thessalonica (3²⁻⁶). These conditions suit the present stay at Corinth and no other. The date of the first letter is A.D. 51, and of the second the same year or early in A.D. 52.

2. The value of these letters is twofold. They present a picture of the early Christian Church at its beginnings. And they also give us an account of Paul's teaching at the outset of his ministry. With regard to the former, the points of chief interest are these. (1) The steadfastness of these Macedonians under persecution. It is clear that the persecution was severe after Paul's departure, and it is the first mention we have of persecution of Christians by heathen, "doubtless on a charge of disloyalty to Rome" (Foakes-Jackson). The letters are full of praise for this quality of courageous endurance. (2) Another point is the brotherly love which prevailed among the members of the Church. This seems to have been a characteristic of early Christianity and showed itself in the most practical ways of helpfulness. (3) But, with these two fine qualities, there were also tendencies of a less admirable kind. The members are warned against idolatry and impurity, the two sins mentioned in the "decrees of the Council" in Acts 15²⁰. These were dangers because the Gentile members had been brought up in a pagan religion in which both practices were part of the religious ritual. They were also warned against idleness, and this fault was due directly to the belief in Christ's speedy Return, for which Paul himself was responsible. If Christ was to come back at once, why bother working, or going on with ordinary business? The members of the Church were falling into disorderliness and indolence on this account. And Paul exhorts them to "mind their own business and work with their own hands" (1 Thess. 4¹¹).

3. Such is the picture of this primitive Church. But the letters also tell us what Paul's early teaching was about. So far as we can see, one prominent topic was

the Second Coming of Christ. No doubt the main truths of the Gospel would be preached. But it was the *Parousia* (as the Second Advent is called) that laid hold of the Thessalonian mind. The early Church seems to have been unanimous in sharing a belief in the immediate Return of Christ. This was based partly on the teaching of Christ Himself (largely misunderstood) and partly on the current Apocalyptic expectations which all Jews cherished. Paul at first held the same belief, and it was this he had preached at Thessalonica. Later, he modified it, and, though he always held to it, he learned that the Parousia was more distant than he had imagined. By the time of St. John the Parousia had been "spiritualized." Christ was to "come" in His Spirit, and that often, before the final Advent. As Wood points out, Schweitzer's assertion that Jesus Himself believed in the imminence of His Messianic Return neglects some of the salient facts of the Gospels (like the parables of the Talents, the Mustard Seed and others, and the sayings about the gradual growth of the Kingdom). Paul's teaching in these epistles on this subject may be summarized thus: Christ will come back, and soon, but not just at once. In any case He will not come until certain things have happened. Therefore go about your business as usual.

4. The "certain things" are referred to in a passage of extraordinary difficulty in 2 Thessalonians 2³⁻¹², of which Foakes-Jackson says that "no satisfactory explanation has ever been given." Paul says that Christ cannot come back until a Man of Sin, "the lawless one," is revealed. At present he is restrained by some power from his full evil activity. But by and by this restraint will be removed, and then the crisis will come

which will bring Christ. Some writers think that the fierce Man of Sin is the Jewish Anti-Christ who will head a great persecution of Christians, and that the Roman power is what restrained him for a time. This would be taken away and Jewish hatred would have free outlet. Others think the Man of Sin is the Roman Emperor who "set himself forth as God" (referring to the emperor worship). It is difficult to understand this obscure passage, but in any case Paul teaches that there is some mysterious hindrance to Christ's immediate return, and that is the main point.

5. One more point may be mentioned. Why *two* letters? The first letter had referred to the Parousia in strong terms. But in the meantime news had come to Paul that the expectation of it had unsettled many converts who were neglecting their affairs and leading an idle life. The second letter was sent to deal with this situation, and is distinctly colder in its tone and sharper in its exhortations.

LX. THE THIRD JOURNEY

EPHESUS. RELIGION AND SELF-INTEREST

ACTS 18²⁴⁻²⁸; 19

Date A.D. 53-56

A. For the Teacher

1. Asia. This was the name given to the province at the western end of Asia Minor. Its chief city, Ephesus, was at the mouth of the river Cayster. It was at the outlet of the great trade route from the East and lay 3 miles from the sea. It was, in Paul's day,

one of the biggest ports in the world, the seat of a “proconsul” and a “free city,” with a large measure of self-government. This privilege (of being a “free city”) was enjoyed only at the pleasure of Rome. Hence the warning of the town-clerk that, if there was a disturbance, it might be taken away.

2. The glory of Ephesus was its great Temple of Diana, which was one of the seven wonders of the world. Its hundred columns were 60 feet high. Its roof of cedar was supported by columns of jasper. Behind the altar was a shrine with the famous image of the goddess, a female figure in wood with many breasts, symbolizing fertility. This image was supposed to have fallen from the sky (19³⁵). Ephesus owed its fame to the popularity of the worship of Diana and the splendour of her Temple. Pilgrims came in large numbers from all quarters, and bought models of the goddess in her shrine. These were made of silver for the rich, and terra cotta for the poorer. Hence the trouble with the silversmiths’ guild when trade fell off owing to the large number of conversions to Christianity.

3. Ephesus was also the headquarters of a confederacy of Asian cities which held common festivals and games and encouraged the “cult” or worship of the Roman Emperor, which was the official or State religion. The emperor was “worshipped” as the symbol of authority, representing the State and being God’s vice-gerent. Ephesus had a Temple to the emperor. The Asiarchs (31) or “those of Asia” were the officials of this confederacy. Observe that they acted in the usual way of Roman officials whom Paul met. They befriended him in a marked fashion. (These details are taken mainly from Wood, pp. 146-9.)

B. Notes

Chapter xix. 1. *upper coasts*: R.V. “country.”

There were two ways to Ephesus from the east, one along the trade route, the other (a shorter way) by a horse road through the hills to the north. This was the road Paul used.

Verse 2. *whether there be . . .*: R.V. “whether the Holy Ghost was given.” There was something lacking in their Christianity.

Verse 9. *school of Tyrannus*. An old MS. adds “from the 5th to the 9th hour,” i.e. Paul used it after lectures were over, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Verse 10. *Two years*, during which 1 Corinthians was written, and all the district was evangelized, probably by deputies (Timothy and others). It was at this time the churches of Colossæ and Laodicea were founded, and the seven churches of Revelation.

Verse 13. *exorcists*. Jewish practisers of magic, who cast out demons by the use of magic formulæ or the uttering of powerful names.

Verse 19. *books*: i.e. books containing the magical ritual or formulæ, called “Ephesian letters.”

Verse 24. *shrines*: i.e. models of the shrine of Diana in the Temple, with the goddess in it.

Verse 27. *Diana*: the Latin name for the goddess Artemis, a nature-deity, the “great mother,” worshipped all over Asia Minor.

Verse 28. *Great is Diana . . .*: better “O Great Artemis of the Ephesians,” a commonly used form of prayer to the goddess.

Verse 31. *Asiarchs*. See under *A*.

Verse 35. *worshipper*: better “Temple-Keeper” (R.V.); this title greatly coveted by Asian cities;

literally “temple-sweeper” or sacristan of the goddess.

image which . . . : rather “from heaven,” i.e. the sky.

Verse 38. *the law is open*: rather “the courts are open” (R.V.), i.e. the Roman assizes at which serious cases were tried by the proconsuls.

Verse 39. *a lawful assembly*: “the regular Assembly” (R.V.), i.e. duly constituted. The present one was irregular, not properly called or sanctioned.

C. *The Lesson*

1. Paul had been revisiting his Galatian churches, and now was able to satisfy his long-cherished wish to evangelize “Asia,” and especially Ephesus. This time he was not “hindered” by the Spirit. He passed along from Pisidian Antioch on the trade route, and then cut over through the hills by a short road.

2. *Apollos*. Preaching and teaching had been going on before he came. Apollos, a learned Jew of the Hellenist or “broad” school. He knew only “the baptism of John,” i.e. John’s preaching of a Messiah. He reasoned on this in the synagogue. Aquila and Priscilla, who had been working at Ephesus, taught him the full truth of the Gospel, and then sent him off to Corinth to exercise his great gifts there. He was so much appreciated there that a party grew up who preferred him to Paul (1 Cor. 1¹²).

3. *Paul’s Work at Ephesus* (1-7). As usual first in the synagogue, for three months. Then the customary opposition, and separation of Paul from the Jews, the converts going with him.

4. *In the School of Tyrannus* (⁹). The lecture-room

of a local teacher hired. Here, after lecture hours, from 11 a.m. till 3 p.m., Paul preached and discussed. Just visualize the hard life of the Apostle. Working at his tent-making from early morning till eleven. Then, at hours usually devoted to rest, Paul engaged in strenuous evangelizing. At work again at his trade in the evening (see 2 Thess. 3^a, "working night and day").

5. *For Two Years* (¹⁰). This went on for two years. But not this only. All "Asia" was evangelized, probably by the many helpers Paul had with him. The churches of Laodicea, Colossæ, and others were founded now. A wide ministry and very successful. Notice one point especially. From Ephesus as a centre he established the Macedonian churches on the one hand (see verse 22, they were just opposite), and on the other, he spread Christianity in the province of Asia. No wonder he had longed to be at Ephesus. Also at this time he wrote 1 Corinthians. A busy, happy, fruitful time. Paul must have conceived more and more clearly during this period the idea of conquering the world for Christ. Already (²¹) he had his eye on Rome, the capital.

6. *Miracles and Magic* (¹¹⁻²⁰). The cures wrought by Paul's clothing (¹²). "Nothing incredible in this," says Wood, and gives a parallel. The power of suggestion working on a strong faith. Then the incident of the exorcists (who they were), their practices (see Notes), their adventure with the madman. The conversion of many of these magicians. The bonfire of their "books" with magic formulæ. Worth £2,000, says the writer of Acts !

7. *The Silversmiths* (²³⁻²⁸). The time of the annual festival of the goddess, Diana. This was a great

occasion, with games, races and general entertainment. Great crowds attracted to the city. Like London during a season at Wembley. The silversmiths did a roaring trade selling "shrines," or models of Diana in her shrine. Paul's success threatened this trade, and men like Demetrius had a large capital sunk in it. Who Diana was. Her Temple. Position of Ephesus as her "Temple-Keeper." All the trade and religion and prosperity of the city were bound up with worship of Diana. These facts explain the complaint of Demetrius to his Trade Union and their excitement.

8. *The Riot (29-41).* The tradesmen were joined by the mob. All rush to the theatre. Describe a Greek theatre, great building holding 50,000 people. No roof. This the place for public assemblies. A wild scene. Everybody shouting for Diana but most of the people not knowing what it was all about. Paul anxious to come forward and speak to the people. Prevented by disciples and "Asiarchs" (see under *A*). The Jews, afraid that they would be identified with this Anti-Christian riot, put up Alexander, one of themselves, to explain that they were not the culprits ! The mob howled him down. Then the clever speech of the town clerk. His points were : (1) if these men (Paul and his friends) are criminals, the courts are open ; (2) if there is any step to be taken it should be at a regular assembly, not at this riotous gathering ; and (3) Ephesus might lose its position as a "free city" at any moment through such disturbances. This speech ended the riot. But clearly Paul could not stay longer in Ephesus with any hope of usefulness. It is clear that Paul was in serious danger of his life (2 Cor. 1⁸).

9. Here we see Christianity coming up against, not

the Jews, but the “ vested interests ” of heathen religion, i.e. up against the self-interest of people. The success of Christ meant loss of money and trade. It was Christ or gain. But the victory of Christ often means that in any age. We may have to choose between Christ and some form of material wealth or pleasure or benefit. Indeed this is probably the real issue of all times in men’s lives. When good and evil struggle for the soul, the good often means Christ, and to choose it means sometimes loss in some form or other of what we value. But the reward ?

Expression Work. 1. Describe a day in the life of Paul. 2. Why had Paul so keenly desired to work in Ephesus ? 3. Describe a Greek theatre.

LXI. THE FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS

1. The Letters dealt with in this book are those which throw useful light on the personality and work of Paul, and on the condition and growth of the early Church. They are really part of the narrative and are necessary to the full understanding of it. The first Letter to the Corinthians is particularly valuable in this respect. “The Epistles to the Corinthians,” says Foakes-Jackson, “are, especially the First, the most valuable documents which those who desire to construct a picture of early Christianity possess.” What we get from the first Letter is as follows : (1) An insight into Paul’s real power. He was not merely a great preacher ; he was a great pastor. He not only won converts ; he built them up and guided them and

instructed them. (2) 1 Corinthians gives us our most convincing proofs of the fact of the Resurrection of Christ (the list of appearances in chapter 15). (3) It also gives us the earliest and fullest account of the institution of the Lord's Supper, an account which Paul says came from Christ Himself (through Peter perhaps). (4) And finally, nowhere do we get so complete an account of the moral and spiritual state of the churches in their earliest stages as we do here.

2. The genuineness of the Letter is universally acknowledged. It was written during Paul's stay at Ephesus. Paul wrote four letters to the Corinthian church (1) a severe letter bidding her hold no communion with fornicators (1 Cor. 5⁹) ; (2) 1 Corinthians in reply to questions from the church ; (3) a very severe letter of rebuke demanding the punishment of some members who had defied his authority (2 Cor. 2^{3, 4, 9}; and 7^{8 ff.}) ; and (4) 2 Corinthians, the most pastoral of all his letters and the most revealing.

3. The occasion of the letter was this. Some people had arrived at Ephesus from Corinth and gave Paul a bad account of the state of the church (1 Cor. 1¹¹). Also, in reply to his first letter (which we do not possess) a deputation came from Corinth with several definite questions on certain points of doctrine and practice. These two facts explain the twofold character of the letter. It deals with abuses and disorders in the Church, and also answers clearly the questions put.

4. *The state of the Church.* Corinth was a Greek city, and all Greek cities were characterized by a party spirit. The citizens ranged themselves in factions under different leaders. This spirit had naturally crept into the church, and Paul mentions the different

parties. Some professed adherence to Apollos because they liked his philosophical way of teaching better than Paul's "simple Gospel." Others were "of Cephas," probably because he was one of the original (and "real") apostles. Some were "of Christ," because they would not acknowledge any of the apostles. Others were loyal to Paul. This was a hopelessly bad state of things, and is dealt with in chapters 1-4. Again, Corinth was a dreadfully immoral city. Its very religion was a kind of consecrated immorality. And converts from the old religion were not free of the taint. They had been used to sexual indulgence, and they were not made holy all at once. One very bad case of this was reported (chapter 5). Again, the Greeks were very fond of philosophical discussion, and loved to hear themselves talk. They were more ready to accept the Gospel intellectually than morally. And disorders had crept into the worship. People with "gifts," especially that of "tongues," showed off. There was no proper discipline. Even at the Lord's Table there was a lack of decent reverence. Women, in particular, were asserting themselves in a scandalous fashion! And numbers were giving way to contention instead of showing mutual love, taking their quarrels before a heathen magistrate! All this makes an unpleasant picture of the early Church.

5. *Questions answered.* The questions asked by the church referred to the following points : (1) In chapter 7, about marriage. It is legitimate, may be a duty, but in view of the nearness of the Parousia celibacy is preferable. (2) Chapters 8-10, is it right to eat food sacrificed to idols ? For the "strong" this may be right, but the "weak" cannot do it without harm. Therefore let the strong refrain for the sake of the weak.

Give up your "rights" if your brother is hindered by your freedom. (3) Chapters 12-14, spiritual gifts. All gifts are from God, but they ought all to be exercised "for edification." Conceit, display, disorder, self-assertion are all forbidden by love

6. This chapter only offers a general survey of the letter, sufficient to make it intelligible to anyone who wishes to read it aloud to a class. The following analysis, therefore, is general, and meant to put up guiding posts for the reader. The contents of the letter are as follows: (1) Party spirit (1-4); (2) the case of horrid impurity (5); (3) quarrels and going to law (6); (4) questions connected with marriage (7); (5) food sacrificed to idols, or Christian expediency (8-10); (6) the place of women in the church (11¹⁻¹⁶); (7) The Lord's Supper (11¹⁷⁻³⁴); (8) Spiritual Gifts (12-14); (9) the Resurrection of Christ and that of believers (15); (10) Conclusion (16).

LXII. THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

A PICTURE OF PAUL

ACTS 20-22; 2 CORINTHIANS

A. For the Teacher

1. Luke tells the last part of the story of Paul with great fullness. It contains the legal trials of Paul, and these are recorded with far greater detail than the earlier, and more important, events. Why? Ramsay says, because Luke is anxious to show how favourable the Roman authorities were to Paul and to Christianity at this time. Wood says, because Rome was the

climax of the tale, and all this shows how Paul was led to Rome. Blunt says, for both these reasons, and also because it provides a crowning instance of the Jewish rejection of the Gospel, while it also gives occasion for a clear defence of Paul's whole work. At any rate, the narrative is careful and detailed, so much so that an itinerary can be made of Paul's journey day by day, and we know the exact date of his arrival in Jerusalem, 27th May, A.D. 57.

2. It is an equally curious fact that Luke says nothing in Acts of two things. One is the severe strain through which Paul was passing over the condition of things in Corinth. We learn of this from the second Corinthian Letter. His days were full of anxiety and suffering, but we would not know this from Acts. Second Corinthians has therefore to be used in describing the events of this period. The other matter Luke omits is the great collection for the poor at Jerusalem. This was the most prominent affair in Paul's mind at the time. His letters are full of it. He was anxious that all his churches should make a collection for the poor members of the Jerusalem Church, his motive being the desire to show that the Church was one and to cement this unity. He arranges that the churches should appoint delegates to carry their offerings to Jerusalem. But Luke says nothing of all this. The former omission is perhaps due to Luke's unwillingness to emphasize any disunion in the Church. The latter is perhaps due to the fact that the collection failed to achieve its object.

3. Many things in the narrative suggest that at this time Paul was in "affluent circumstances." He was able to defray the large cost of a two years' residence at

the court in Cæsarea, to hire a house for two years in Rome, and finally to face the heavy expense of an appeal to the Emperor in Rome. He also paid the money due by the four men who had a vow (21^{23 ff.}). Ramsay suggests that his family fortune had at this time fallen to him, perhaps by the death of his father.

B. Notes

Chapter xx. 5. *tarried for us.* Note the resumption of the "we" in the narrative, the description of an eyewitness.

tarried: R.V. "were waiting." Troas the rendezvous of the delegates from the churches.

Verses 9, 10. miracle ? or resuscitation ? either.

Verse 13. Paul walked the 12 miles over a hilly road to Assos, for his health or for leisure to think.

Chapter xxi. 15. *took up our carriages:* better, "we equipped animals," i.e. mules for the journey to Jerusalem.

Verse 16. *Mnason.* His house probably half-way to Jerusalem.

Verse 31. *chief captain.* The garrison consisted of a cohort of 600 men. The barracks were at the Tower of Antonia, at the north-west corner of the Temple area. The garrison was always kept in readiness at the times of the Jewish feasts for fear of a riot (Blunt).

Verse 38. *Egyptian.* Josephus tells us that about this time an Egyptian Jew led 30,000 men to the Mount of Olives with promises of a supernatural deliverance. The followers were dispersed, but the leader escaped (Blunt).

murderers, rather “the Assassins,” i.e. the Sicarii, or “dagger-men,” a kind of secret society that was formed at this time to gain the political ends of the Jews by assassination.

C. The Lesson

1. Luke tells us that when Paul left Ephesus he went to Macedonia and Greece (where he remained three months), and then set out for Jerusalem by way of Macedonia. But he omits two very important events. Paul’s plans were to go to Macedonia and Greece, then to Jerusalem and then to Rome. But meantime he heard very bad accounts of the state of things in Corinth, so bad that he sent a severe letter to the church there by Titus. He was full of anxiety about things in Corinth. So much so that when he came to Troas on his way to Macedonia he could not preach (2 Cor. 2^{12, 13}). So he pushed on into Macedonia in order to see Titus and find out the truth. Titus met him at Philippi, and gave him such good news that he was greatly relieved. The church at Corinth had submitted to Paul’s authority. In his relief and joy he wrote the letter known as 2 Corinthians.

2. *Second Corinthians.* The two things in Corinth which disturbed Paul were : (1) the malignity of his enemies there. They denied his authority as an apostle, said he was not one of the original apostles. He had no proper “introduction,” and so on. (2) One particular offender they had tolerated and retained in the membership. Paul therefore deals with these things. (1) He explains his own conduct and his plans (1, 2); (2) then he states his credentials as an apostle (3-7); (3) he then turns to the great collection that was being made for the poor (8, 9) and (4¹⁰⁻¹³) finally, he comes back

to the question of his apostleship and vindicates his own position. That is the clearest sketch one can give of a letter which has no definite plan. It is one of the finest of Paul's letters, and is the fullest and richest and most human of all his self-revelations. Nowhere do we get so vivid and real a picture of Paul the Man as here.

3. The second matter Luke omits is the collection Paul was making for the poor at Jerusalem. This was going on all over the churches, and delegates had been appointed to bring the money to Jerusalem. They were to meet at Troas, and go with Paul from that point. Paul spent the winter of A.D. 56 in Macedonia and Corinth, where he wrote the letter to the Romans, and he seems to have done a great deal of preaching throughout the country.

4. At length he started off on his way to Jerusalem. He meant to sail, but a plot to kill him on board changed his plans, and he determined to go northwards through Macedonia. At Troas the delegates met him (here we resume the story of Acts 20^{4, 5}). At Troas the meeting on the Lord's Day—the first description of a sacramental service. The incident of Eutychus. Then Paul walked to Assos (12 miles), while his companions went by sea (see Notes). At Miletus he met the Elders of the church of Ephesus, and gave them a touching and beautiful address, dealing with their duties as "bishops" (another name for "Elder") and revealing his own strong sense of coming calamity.

5. *The Voyage to Jerusalem (21).* At Patara Paul changed into a big cargo boat (it took seven days to unload at Tyre). At Tyre Paul was warned about the danger awaiting him at Jerusalem. This seemed to be

known everywhere, and his journey was a series of farewells. At Cæsarea, again, Agabus in the Old Testament prophetic way, showed Paul by a symbolic act that imprisonment was before him if he went on. Paul put aside all these warnings, his mission in Jerusalem was so important (21^{13, 14}). At Cæsarea the company disembarked and went forward riding on mules. They arrived in Jerusalem on 27th May, A.D. 57.

6. *In Jerusalem* (21^{17 ff.}). Paul received cordially by James and the Elders. They were, however, anxious about his safety. A rumour had been spread that he had been persuading Jews to neglect Jewish law. To quiet this James suggested that Paul should show himself to be a good Jew by taking part with four men who were under a Nazirite vow. Paul agreed, but when he was in the Temple the fanatical Jews accused him of taking a Gentile into a sacred place, an act punishable by death. Paul was seized by the furious mob and dragged out. The garrison of Roman soldiers in the fort beside the Temple were, however, on the alert. Paul was rescued and conveyed to the fort. His interview with the Captain. His speech to the people. Not ill received till he declared his mission to the Gentiles. A fresh riot. Paul saved with difficulty. This ends his missionary career. From this time he is tried repeatedly by Jewish and Roman courts, in Jerusalem, Cæsarea and Rome. The shadow of the impending end already gathers.

7. *A Picture of Paul.* From all this we can construct a picture of the great Apostle's life, his sufferings, his courage, his pastoral care, his devotion to Christ, his independence (working with his hands to support himself), his considerateness.

Expression Work. 1. Draw a map of the voyage from Troas to Cæsarea. 2. From 2 Corinthians find what his enemies said against Paul. 3. From the same letter, find what he had to say to justify himself.

LXIII. PAUL BEFORE FELIX

OPPORTUNITY

ACTS 23 and 24,

A. *For the Teacher*

1. Felix. Antonius Felix was one of the worst of the Roman Governors of Judæa. He and his more famous brother, Pallas, had been slaves and had received their freedom probably from the emperor Claudius. Pallas was a favourite of the emperor and exercised great influence at court. It was through him that Felix was appointed governor, and through his influence Felix was continued in office in spite of complaints from his subjects on account of his cruelty and mal-administration. Tacitus says of Felix that “in the practice of all kinds of cruelty and lust he exercised the powers of a king in the spirit of a slave.” And by a modern writer the epithets greedy, savage, treacherous, are applied to him. His wife Drusilla was a Jewess, and he had enticed her away from her husband who was still alive when he married her. Felix was recalled in A.D. 59.

2. Paul’s conduct at the meeting of the Sanhedrim has been justified, excused and condemned by different writers. It is a mistake to imagine that because a man is a character in the Bible his conduct must be defended

in all matters. The plain facts here are : (1) that Paul lost his temper, and (2) that he adopted a ruse or trick to divide the meeting and lead them away from the real point. I do not think that we may feel very much shocked at either of these acts. No doubt Paul's conduct contrasts with that of his Lord in similar circumstances (John 18²² f.). But then Christ *was* the Master, Paul only a fallible human being. And if you realize the injustice, the persecution, the arrogance with which Paul was treated, you will not wonder that he lost his temper. If, as Farrar holds, Paul was short-sighted (Gal. 4¹⁵ R.V.), his not recognizing the High Priest is explained. As to the ruse, I cannot see anything wrong in this action of Paul's. He knew the unscrupulous character of his judges, and as a matter of fact it was, in his judgment (Acts 26⁶⁻⁸), the question of the Resurrection that was the kernel of the accusation against him.

B. Notes

Chapter xxiii. 24. *Beasts*. Why plural ? probably for Paul's companions, possibly Luke and Titus (Still).

Verse 31. *Antipatris* : a city 35 miles from Jerusalem, i.e. more than half-way to Cæsarea.

Chapter xxiv. 16. *Herein* : i.e. in this faith.

Verse 21. Ironical. Is it a crime to profess such a faith ?

Verse 22. *Way*, with a capital. The common name for the Christian faith. Cf. 9²; 24¹⁴.

Verse 23. There were three grades of imprisonment according to Roman law : (1) confinement in the public gaol ; (2) military custody, in which the prisoner was kept in the barracks or in a room outside hired by himself in the care of soldiers, to one

of whom he was perpetually chained ; and (3) free custody, allowed only in the cases of men of high rank. Both at Cæsarea and in Rome Paul was committed to the second grade. In Cæsarea he was confined in the "palace"; in Rome in a hired room. His friends had free access to him (Wood).

Verse 26. Another proof of Paul's new affluence. Felix would not expect a small bribe.

C. *The Lesson*

1. We left Paul in the custody of Lysias. The captain, anxious to find the truth, summoned a meeting of the Sanhedrim, and took Paul to it, so that he might hear the truth. Christ, Peter and Stephen had already been tried before this court, now Paul. The only interest of the meeting is the way Paul behaved. He lost his temper. No wonder. The majesty of Jesus in the same circumstances. But Paul was only a fallible human being. Also it was, perhaps, a little "tricky" of Paul to raise the question of the Resurrection, knowing it would set Sadducees and Pharisees by the ears. But this question was really one of the main things that Paul preached. It was his gospel, and therefore he was not much to blame for raising the question.

2. Lysias was not much enlightened by the meeting. He took Paul back to the castle or fort. Paul's vision and its comfort for him (23¹¹). The plot against him by forty men. Probably some of the "dagger men" or sicarii who had banded themselves together to fight the enemies of the Jews by assassination. Their vow. What became of it when their plot failed? Probably absolved by a Jewish Rabbi. Paul's nephew. Lysias

sees that the situation is serious, and resolves to send Paul to the governor for trial at headquarters at Cæsarea. The large military escort. Why so large? Josephus tells us that the country was seething with brigandage and the people on the verge of rebellion. Hence the precautions in case he, Lysias, should be blamed for any trouble. The letter of Lysias (23²⁶⁻³⁰), amusing perversion of facts in it.

3. *At Cæsarea.* Felix has Paul before him, and orders him to be kept till the Jewish accusers appear. The trial. The Jews represented by "counsel," a barrister or advocate, Tertullus. The speech of Tertullus. "This man, Paul, is a public pest. Riots follow him wherever he goes. Get him out of the way, and you will have peace and order. Besides, he tried to violate the Temple by introducing a Gentile into it!" This last charge alone was serious, for the penalty was death. Paul's defence against these charges was complete. "There is no proof whatever of the serious charge," he said, "and indeed the whole trouble is one of my religious belief. I am a Jew, but a Jew of that sect that believes in the Resurrection. I am entirely innocent of any crime against the State or the Temple." Felix saw at once that there was nothing in the charge, but he did not wish to offend the Jews, and therefore kept Paul in custody on a flimsy pretext of waiting to consult Lysias. Paul was thus detained for two years, on the ground that his release might provoke disturbance.

4. *Two Years in Cæsarea.* What did Paul do during these two years? Some writers say he wrote the letters to Philippi, Colossæ and Ephesus, but, on the whole it is more probable these were written in Rome. An

interesting suggestion is that Luke was busy collecting material for his Gospel now, and writing the book of Acts with Paul's help. Paul was allowed to see his friends as much as he liked.

5. Before Felix. But the most important event was the interview Paul had with Felix and Drusilla (24²⁴⁻²⁷). It was not a trial, but a meeting to hear Paul expound his beliefs. Paul did not discuss the Christian faith, but he preached righteousness and judgment with such power that for a moment Felix was brought face to face with God. It was a great moment for Felix. He saw the truth and he saw himself, and no doubt Paul presented Christ as a Saviour. But the moment passed, the greatest opportunity in Felix's life ! Paul had many more interviews with Felix (²⁶), but Felix was never moved again. And when he was recalled by the Emperor he left Paul in custody to please the Jews.

6. The Hour of Opportunity. This is one of the great scenes in the Bible—a soul face to face with its golden chance and losing it ! Shakespeare says, “There is a tide in the affairs of men which taken at the flood leads on to fortune.” This is true in business and in many other ways. True also of God and the soul. And the lesson of this incident is “Seize your chance when Christ is at your door.”

Expression Work. 1. What trials does the New Testament tell us took place before the Sanhedrim ? 2. What were the differences between the Sadducees and the Pharisees ? 3. What was the invariable attitude of the Roman governors to Paul and Christianity ?

LXIV. PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA

INDIFFERENCE

ACTS 25 and 26

A. For the Teacher

1. *Agrippa.* Agrippa II was the last of the famous family of Herods, "a race conspicuous for men and women renowned alike for their ability, beauty, ruthlessness and profligacy" (Foakes-Jackson). He was the great-grandson of Herod the Great (the Herod of the Infancy), and the son of Agrippa I (the Herod of Acts 12¹). He was in favour at the Court of Rome, was made ruler over a good part of the country north and east of Galilee, was entrusted with the custody of the Temple and the appointment of the High Priest. He was loyal to the Roman power, even during the Jewish war of A.D. 66–70, and lived in Rome after the Fall of Jerusalem for thirty years. He was "clever, indolent and dissolute," but we gain a favourable impression of him in Acts, at least for his fairness. To such a man Paul must have seemed an interesting and entertaining fanatic.

2. *Significance of these Trials.* Dr. Ironside Still has an interesting note on this subject. The substance of it is given here. The trials of Paul and his defences before his judges are treated by Luke at great length to show certain things. (1) It was Jewish hatred of Gentile Christianity that led to Paul's persecution, not Roman justice. (2) Lysias found nothing to condemn in Paul. Nor did Felix or Festus or Agrippa. (3) Paul appealed to the Emperor in order to have the

judgment of the Roman Courts finally confirmed, and so to have Christianity declared a legal and permissible religion. These facts throw light on Luke's motive in writing this account of the extension and expansion of the Christian Church.

B. Notes

Chapter xxv. 12. *the council*: i.e. his chief officers.

Verse 20. *And I, as I doubted*, etc. : "I, as I know little about such disputes" (Blunt).

Chapter xxvi. 6. *the hope*: i.e. of Messiah.

Verse 8. The Resurrection of Christ was the final proof of His Messiahship.

Verse 12. *Whereupon* : in these conditions.

Verse 14. *pricks* : R.V. goad. The pricks were Paul's perplexed thoughts, the faith and courage of the Christians, his own failure to keep the Law, and his growing fear that the Christians might be right.

Verses 16–18. a summary of all that happened.

Verse 21. *For these causes* : R.V. this cause. The real cause of the Jews' persecution was Paul's assertion that the Gospel was for the Gentiles on the same terms as the Jews.

Verses 22, 23. Christianity was simply perfected Judaism, as all the early Christians held.

Verse 28. *Almost thou persuadest*, etc. : wrong, the words are ironical. R.V. has "with but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian." Agrippa was amused. "You think you can make me a Christian in a minute as you say you were" (Wood).

C. *The Lesson*

1. Another trial by a Roman judge. Felix was recalled and was succeeded by Festus, apparently a fair-minded man. As he was new to the district, the Jews thought they would play on his ignorance. Their plot (3). Foiled by the decision of Festus. Trial at Caesarea. Notice the malignity of Paul's enemies. After two years as fierce and persistent as ever ! The proposal of Festus, made to please the Jews (9). Paul given the choice of place of trial. His indignation at the continued injustice. He was to be "a mere pawn in the Governor's game with the Jews." So Paul takes the only course open to him, appeals to the final court in Rome, a privilege open to all Roman citizens. Festus would have refused this if he had been convinced of Paul's guilt, but it would have been a risk. So, after consultation with his advisers, he allowed it. This shows that Paul was regarded as an important person, and perhaps that the question at issue was seen to be important also, viz. whether the Christian religion was to be a legal religion in the empire.

2. But Festus did not really understand the matters involved. What was he to say in his report ? Happily, Agrippa was to pay him a state visit of courtesy, and Agrippa would advise him on the point. So when Agrippa arrived Festus put the matter fully before him, and Agrippa agreed to hear Paul's case.

3. *Paul before Agrippa* (26). Who Agrippa was (see under A). The last of the Herods. Why he was there. A sort of colleague of Festus. Half a Jew, and in touch with Jewish affairs. The brilliant scene at the reception. Not a trial, but a conference, at which all the great officers of state were present. Festus in full dress,

Agrippa in royal purple. Berenice in her flashing jewels. A memorable scene. Paul facing all this ! His great speech. The substance of it as follows : (1) His early life and religion. (2) His fierce persecutions of the Christians. (3) Then his conversion. How he came to know that Christ was alive. As a Pharisee he had believed in resurrection, as a Christian he was certain of it ! (4) How he discovered that Christ was a gift to Gentiles as well as Jews. All this Festus listened to with amazement. The man was mad ! Learned, of course, but quite mad. This Jewish Messiah the Saviour of *Romans* ! Paul's reply. He turns to Agrippa. " You must know about this, for it has not been a hole-and-corner business." To which Agrippa replied, " Paul, you have just told us you became a Christian in a minute. You want to make me one in as short a time !" It was a good-humoured jest. But Agrippa saw clearly that Paul was innocent of crime. A fanatic, yes, but not a criminal. He ought to be released, but, having appealed to the Emperor, he must go to Rome. What a pity it is that we do not possess the report Festus sent to Rome !

4. Point out the meaning of all these narratives of trials and hearings before Gallio, Felix, Festus, Agrippa, Cæsar. Luke wishes to make clear that Roman governors everywhere found Paul innocent and therefore did not consider the Christian religion illegal or dangerous. The climax of the story is in Rome, and Paul went to Rome to obtain a clear judgment of the supreme court that his preaching of Christ was in no sense against the law.

5. The scene described here shows how religious earnestness must appear to worldly-minded people and

to the "great." To Festus Paul was simply incredibly "daft." To Agrippa he was amusingly, and a little vulgarly, zealous for an absurd creed. So the Salvation Army appeared to many at first. So the Methodists appeared to society at their origin. So intense religious zeal must always appear to those without real religion. Yet, who had the truth and the right in that brilliant gathering? If we are religious at all, we should be whole-heartedly so. If the Gospel is true, it is "tremendously true," and no one can believe it and be half-hearted about it.

Expression Work. 1. How many Herods are mentioned in the New Testament? (Six.) Describe them. 2. Compare the account of Paul's conversion here with the other two in Acts (9 and 22).

LXV. THE VOYAGE TO ROME

THE POWER OF FAITH

ACTS 27, and 28¹⁻¹⁶

A. *For the Teacher*

1. Luke's accuracy as a historian has been fully established by the researches of modern scholars, particularly Sir William Ramsay. But in regard to this voyage a special investigation was made by a Scottish gentleman, James Smith of Jordanhill, who was an authority on naval matters and knew the Mediterranean intimately. His remarkable book, *Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul*, has vindicated Luke's knowledge completely, and has been a standard authority on this event since. All writers follow it. In the sketch below

I have largely reproduced Ramsay's narrative, with his headings. It is the fullest of all I have seen.

2. An ancient ship was built much the same fore and aft. It had one mast with a large mainsail and could only sail with the wind. It was steered by two paddle-shaped rudders which projected through holes in the stern. Any great strain made the timbers open, and this was a great danger in a heavy sea, so that the ship was frequently "frapped" or undergirded by cables passed round the ship transversely. The compass had not been invented, and so navigation could be carried on only in summer, and when the stars were shut out by clouds the sailors were helpless. Navigation ceased in November, and ships were laid up for the winter. Paul started in August, A.D. 59, and by the time Crete was reached the season was far advanced. Hence the council to decide where they were to winter (27¹²). Many of the large ships were engaged in the conveyance of corn to Rome. Egypt was the chief imperial granary, and the "Alexandrian corn ship" which was at Myra was probably one of the Imperial fleet. The centurion therefore could use it for his purposes, and his authority was supreme on board even over the captain.

B. Notes

Chapter xxvii. 1. *Julius*. A centurion of the "Augustan Cohort," i.e. an officer of a body of troops who were engaged chiefly in foreign service as couriers or in supervising shipments of corn for Rome or in police work, conveying prisoners. They were known as "frumentarii" (corn-officers) or "peregrini" (officers on foreign service), and their troops were known as the Augustan or Imperial Cohort.

Verse 9. *Fast Day*: Day of Atonement.

Verse 27. *to and fro*, wrong. They drifted straight.

Adria. In ancient times the name of the whole Western Mediterranean.

Chapter xxviii. 2. *barbarians* : “foreigners,” i.e. non-Greeks.

Verse 7. *The First of the Island* : a title, known now to be correct from inscriptions.

Verse 11. *Castor and Pollux* : R.V. “The Twin Brothers.” These were the patrons of sailors.

Verse 12. The wind fell. Hence delay.

C. *The Lesson*

1. *The Start*. Paul, one of a company of prisoners, who were probably being sent to Rome to amuse the crowd by being “thrown to the lions.” The centurion (see Notes) deserves notice, an officer of an important body of troops. No ship going to Rome, so a coaster, sailing to ports in Asia Minor, was used. The idea was to get a ship for Rome at one of these ports. Luke and Aristarchus were with Paul. Why? It could only be as his slaves; they would not be allowed otherwise. Or perhaps Luke went as a doctor? The wind in summer was from the west, hence the ship sailed to the east of Cyprus. When it came to Asia Minor, it crept along the coast taking advantage of land breezes and the currents which ran westwards. At Myra there was an Alexandrian corn-ship, one of the Imperial fleet (27⁶). It had sailed straight across to Myra because of the west wind.

2. *Myra to Crete* (7-12). With great difficulty the vessel managed to reach Cnidus, but the west wind was

so strong that the ship had to sail southwards by Crete. Under the shelter of the land, it made its way to Fair-havens. The council called to decide what to do. Paul's advice to winter there, but the centurion naturally took the sailors' advice which was to push on to Phœnix, a much better harbour.

3. *The Storm* (¹³⁻²⁶). A gentle south wind seemed to favour this plan. But suddenly a terrific gale swept down from the mountains (7,000 feet high) and drove them out to the open sea. "The wind," says a modern sailor, "comes down from these mountains fit to blow the ship out of the water." For a little they had shelter in the lee of a little island, Cauda. There they drew in their one boat and undergirded the ship (see under *A*). They took down the mainsail and set a small foresail to keep the boat's head westward in case of being blown on the terrible African quicksands (the Syrtes). And so they drifted at about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles an hour straight westward. The cargo was grain, and if it had shifted it might have sent the ship to the bottom; accordingly much of it was thrown overboard. Then the fittings of the ship followed. The gale held. The crew panic-stricken. Paul's vision and faith. He put courage into the rest.

4. *Land* (²⁷⁻⁴⁴). The sound of breakers told the sailors land was near. Four anchors put out. The attempt of the sailors to escape by boat; detected by Paul; the boat cut away. Paul's sensible advice to eat. The ship driven on a neck of land between a little island and the mainland of Malta. The ship's prow stuck in the mud, and the after part began to break up. This was in "St. Paul's Bay." The soldiers proposed to kill the prisoners, for whose custody they were

responsible. The centurion, however, wishing to save Paul, forbade this, and commanded all to save themselves. All escaped to land.

5. *Malta* (28¹⁻¹⁰). The kindness of the natives (called barbarians, as all non-Greeks were to a Greek). The incident of the viper. Publius, the chief man of the island, entertained Paul and the centurion. The healing of many sick.

6. *To Rome* (28¹¹⁻¹⁶). Date, February, A.D. 60. A new corn-ship (called *The Twin Brothers* because Castor and Pollux were patrons of sailors). The close of the voyage by Syracuse, and Rhegium, to Puteoli in Italy.

7. The great feature of this voyage is its revelation of the Power of Faith. Paul's courage and cool common sense amid the terror-stricken crowd were due to his calm faith in God. He became the leader of soldiers and sailors alike. He never had any doubt or fear because he knew God was taking him to Rome. No power in the world is greater than faith in God. "We had rather a rough time last week," wrote a soldier in the Great War, "and I felt pretty sick as I went into my dug-out, for you know it is hell out here, when the words came to my mind, 'Though I make my bed in hell, Thou art there,' and I felt strongly comforted." God is sovereign. "Behind the wave is the Ocean," and all who believe that are strong and at peace.

Expression Work. 1. Draw a map of Paul's voyage.
2. Describe (or draw) an ancient ship.

LXVI. THE END AND THE BEGINNING

Acts 28

A. For the Teacher

1. *Paul's Last Days.* Acts ends abruptly, and it seems clear that Luke meant to continue the story in a third volume which would have included a history of Paul's trial and of his career after his release. This intention was never fulfilled, possibly because Luke himself perished about the same time as Paul. For the facts of Paul's later life we have to rely on the pastoral epistles (see below) and tradition. It is highly probable that Paul was acquitted after his first trial at Rome. All the Roman governors had declared him innocent. Nero's persecution of the Christians did not break out till A.D. 64, while Paul arrived in Rome in A.D. 60 and was two years in prison there. In *Philippians* (2²⁴) and *Philemon* (2²²) he is confident of his speedy release. It is likely that the Jewish accusers failed to appear in Rome, and the Emperor Claudius had decreed that a prisoner should not be kept more than eighteen months in prison if his accuser did not come forward. This is just the time Paul spent in Rome (two years according to Jewish reckoning are anything between one and two years). Paul, then, was free at the end of A.D. 61 or in A.D. 62. He spent the next two years among his churches in Ephesus, Macedonia and Crete, wintering probably in Epirus. In A.D. 64 the great fire in Rome took place. Nero blamed the Christians, and a fierce persecution broke out. Their immunity no longer existed. Paul was arrested again as a ringleader of the hated sect, sent to Rome and

there beheaded. His last written words are recorded in 2 Timothy.

2. *The Pastoral Epistles.* Did Paul write 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus? The evidence is contradictory. The language and style are not those of Paul. But there are parts of the letters that are stamped with his spirit. All the personal references are Pauline. The conclusion would seem to be that Paul left some brief letters behind him, and that a disciple soon after his death edited these with additions of his own. If this be true then the Epistles are good evidence of the historical situation, of Paul's later career, and of the conditions of Church life between A.D. 65 and A.D. 95.

3. *Contemporary Events.* Nero had come to the throne in A.D. 54 at the age of seventeen, and had given great promise at first. His tutor was Seneca, and this famous man seemed to have a good influence on Nero for a time. "It was the golden age of the Empire." But some time before Paul's arrival at Rome Nero had begun his later and evil career by murdering his mother. From that time his "vileness and cruel caprices were the despair of the Imperial city" (Wood). His vanity, his viciousness and his mad freaks are notorious. He was responsible for the fire which destroyed so much of Rome, and the infamous invention that the Christians had done the deed was the cause of the altered Roman attitude to the Christian Church.

B. Notes

Verse 17. *chief of the Jews*: i.e. the elders of the main synagogues in Rome.

Verse 20. *Hope of Israel.* The Messianic hope which Paul asserted was fulfilled in the Resurrection of Christ.

Verse 21. Perhaps the Jewish enemies of Paul, realizing that they had no case, delayed appearing or sending any word, knowing Paul would be kept in prison for eighteen months.

Verse 26. From Isaiah 6⁹⁻¹⁰.

C. *The Lesson*

1. *Paul in Rome.* It had been Paul's great ambition to come to Rome, the centre of the civilized world, the fountainhead of all power. What an achievement to conquer Rome for Christ! Paul had dreamed of entering Rome as a missioner of his Master. In reality he came as a prisoner, chained to a soldier, not free to move out of his own room! True, Paul was treated leniently. The centurion, Julius, was a good friend, and the Roman authorities were always kind to him. Many privileges were accorded him, e.g. free intercourse with any who visited him (Timothy, Luke, Mark, Tychicus). This confinement lasted for two years, probably because his accusers delayed to appear, and the law courts may have been busy.

2. *Paul's Ministry in Rome.* Paul was a busy man. He had a great ministry in two ways, by preaching and by writing. (1) Of his preaching we have two instances. The Jews were sent for at once on his arrival. His address to them. He had no complaint against his own people. He had been forced to appeal to the Emperor, and he would like to have the opportunity of telling them about his faith. The meeting at which this was done. Little result. The other instance we find in a lovely little letter of his to Philemon. The story of the runaway slave who drifted to Rome, and found his way to Paul's lodging. It is the parable of the Prodigal Son in real life! His conversion and his desire to go back

to his master and make reparation. How Paul's heart must have been warmed by this ! (2) The other ministry was through letters. And in Rome Paul wrote several of his finest letters. The first was to the church at Colossæ, and it dealt with a dangerous superstition that had sprung up there. Paganism believed in a multitude of spirits infesting life, often evil in their nature and needing to be soothed and gratified. Life was full of fear. This superstition had crept into the church. And Paul sends to these foolish people a message which is the cure for all fear, that there is no power in the universe that can hurt the soul that is trusting Christ. The second letter was a general one to all the churches in Asia, though it is called the letter to the *Ephesians*. The theme here is the unity of the believers. They are one body, and every member has his own contribution to make to the riches of the whole Church. The third letter was the most beautiful Paul ever wrote, the letter written to his favourite church, to the beloved *Philippians*. They had heard that he was ill, and had sent him a gift of money. And Paul in reply pours out his very soul to them. The letter is full of personal touches that reveal the Apostle. He tells them all about his circumstances, his trial and his hope of a favourable verdict (1²⁵). Even his imprisonment has served the cause of the Gospel. A clique of Jewish Christians in Rome are preaching in rivalry with him, but what does that matter if Christ is preached ? The letter is remarkable for the fine statement of the Christian faith in chapter 2, for the note of joy in it, and for the revelation Paul makes of himself in chapters 1 and 4. It can be read in a few minutes, but it tells us more of Paul and of Christ than many volumes. It would be excellent to take one

period of Bible instruction at this point and read this letter in Moffatt's translation to the class.

3. *After his Release.* We know (see under A) that Paul was set free after his trial, and the "Pastoral Epistles" tell us how he spent the years after his release. He had been in custody for five years, and it was now A.D. 62. The course of events was as follows: First he went to Spain, as he had purposed. Clement of Rome, a contemporary of Paul, confirms this. Then he went to Crete, which he had passed on his voyage to Rome, and settled Titus there as minister. Then to Ephesus, to Macedonia (seeing his dear friends at Philippi) (1 Tim. 1³). He wintered in Epirus perhaps (Titus 3¹²⁻¹⁴). And there, or somewhere in his travels, he was again arrested. Why?

4. Tell the story of Nero and the great fire. Nero, to shift the blame from himself, said it was the Christians who began the fire. Hence a fierce persecution. Christianity no longer tolerated in the Empire. Paul was taken to Rome and treated with severity. No longer living in a house, but in a dungeon. He was very lonely. Nobody to stand by him. Also he suffered from ill-health and cold (2 Tim. 4¹³). Tradition says he was beheaded outside the walls of Rome.

5. Shakespeare says in *Richard II* :—

"O ! but they say the tongues of dying men
Enforce attention like deep harmony . . .
More are men's ends marked than their lives before :
The setting sun and music at the close
As the last taste of sweets is sweetest last."

If this be so, Paul's last words should be gratefully treasured, 2 Timothy 4⁷⁻⁸, "I have fought the good fight. . . ." Repeat the glorious confession. They

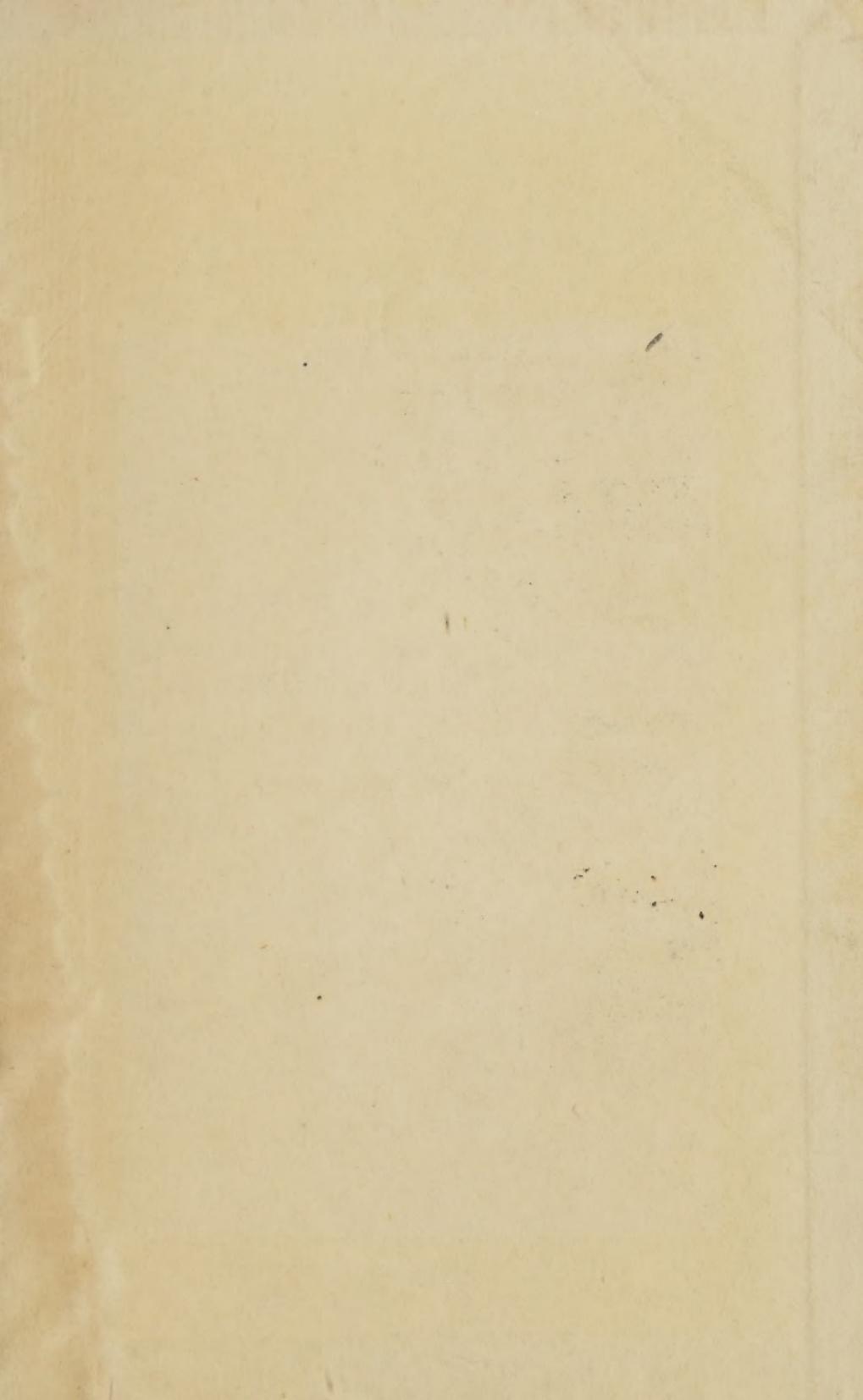
sum up well all we know of Paul. "St. Paul is a man for all time. He was probably the truest Christian the Church has produced. . . . It is a literal fact that Jesus made Paul, and the greatness of the disciple is one of the chief miracles wrought by the Master" (Foakes-Jackson).

6. *The End and the Beginning.* When Jesus died the Jewish authorities thought they had killed His Gospel with Him. When Paul died the Roman authorities thought they had killed it again. But in both cases it rose to a new life, because it is the truth of God. The truth for which the Master and the disciple gave their lives is the truth that created the New Testament and makes it to-day the source of "joy and peace in believing" to countless souls, because it declares the purpose and offer of divine grace for the needs and sorrows and sin of the world.

Expression Work. 1. Gather from 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus the statements that show how Paul spent his closing years. 2. Find out all you can about Nero.

Date Due

RESERVE	RESERVE	FACULTY	
RESERVE	RESERVE	JAY 1 '43	
RESERVE	(Hom) T	MAY 1 5 '43	
RESERVE	RESERVE		
RESERVE	RESERVE		
(Hom) T	Mr 26 '47		
F 5	Mr 19 '47		
RESERVE	RESERVE		
	Reference Library		
(Hom) T	H		
Je 15 '43	RESERVE		
Je 28 '43	RESERVE		
RESERVE	(Hom) Teaching		
	MRCL 12 54		
(Hom) T	FACULTY		
0 22 '43	RESERVE	Want	
m	Teach Bible		



BS2525 .R13

How to teach the New Testament,

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00119 1271